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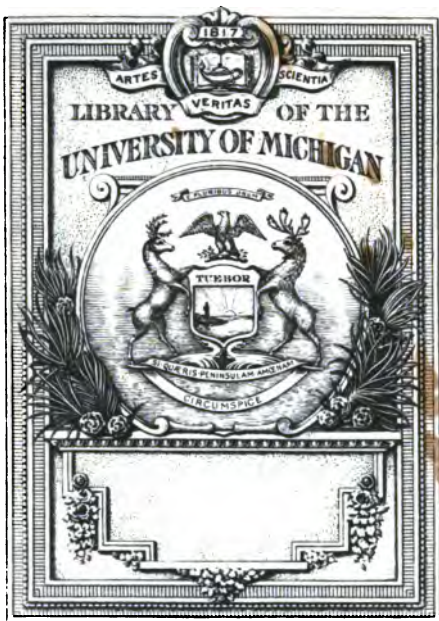
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COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 582.

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BY
JULIA KAVANAGH.

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FRENCH WOMEN OF LETTERS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,
AUTHOR OF "NATHALIE," "ADÈLE," "THE TWO SICILIES,"
ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE title and purport of this volume require some explanation: it is necessary to premise that the women of letters, of whose lives and writings I have attempted to give some account, are strictly novelists.

Novels have assumed a remarkable position. They have become the teachers for good or for evil of many; their powers can be exalted or deplored — it cannot be denied. And the novel is not merely the great feature of modern literature, it is also the only branch in which women have acquired undisputed eminence. Here they owe nothing to indulgence or courtesy. No French novelists were more eminent or more popular in their day than Mademoiselle de Scudéry or Madame de Staël, though two centuries divided them; and if we dare not say as much of our own Miss Edgeworth, spite her genius, we cannot forget that she helped to raise the European fame which eclipsed her own.

A fact so significant seemed to me worthy of consideration, especially in its dawn, and during its progress; and partly because I thought the matter interesting — partly because I felt that a woman may

worthily employ such power as God has given her in rescuing from forgetfulness the labours and the names once honoured and celebrated of other women, I undertook this work.

My object has been to show how far, for the last two centuries and more, women have contributed to the formation of the modern novel in the two great literatures of modern times — the French and the English. To this account of what they did I have prefixed biographical sketches, to show also what they were. The selection, which will, I hope, be found impartial, is based on great celebrity, original or suggestive power, and individual attraction. In this selection none but dead authors, or such as have already stood the test of time, are included. Living or recent writers are still our own. The dead, the now forgotten, and the once famous, they who delighted and often led the world of readers, but whose names are passing away from minds their works have ceased to charm, are, like sovereigns and conquerors in their graves, alone amenable to history.

JULIA KAVANAGH.

Paris.

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FRENCH WOMEN OF LETTERS.

INTRODUCTION.

SINCE the first magnificent dominion granted to man over this earth, which he was commanded to "fill and subdue," his reign has been both haughty and universal. He has armed himself with strength as with a weapon, and stretched his conquest to the farthest horizon. Yet, in the very midst of this power and greatness — from the earliest hours of his rule to this — man, wearied of these physical conquests, has turned from his temporal kingdom, of which history is the record, and raised himself another: an intellectual realm, the vast shadow of the real world, a region of spirits and dreams, peopled with the hopes unfulfilled, the aspirations vague and undefined, that haunt him during his long pilgrimage, and which may be called by the generic and easily-understood name of Romance.

This pining after the unreal in a world so full of glorious realities is certainly one of the strangest features in man's nature. A wish for the unknown and the new haunts him like a sort of torment; he seems bound to see things that are not, to invent what has never been, and what sometimes cannot be, and to transmit the fruits of this strange, dreamy labour to his posterity. Every day men and women sit down and invent tales, which other men and women read, knowing them to be mere inventions, and for that precisely liking and admiring them.

Splendid fame daily rises from this unsubstantial fabric of airy dreams — sometimes even wealth and dignity. Most surprising of all, these phantasms often eclipse their creators, whilst he remains in the shade; the world gravely recognises their right to be — it loves and hates them like true things, and consigns to shame or enshrines in honour the imaginary beings who move and breathe with human aspects and human looks in this imaginary world.

The durability of these shadows is one of the most singular features attending their existence. Their slightness helps to save them from destruction. Empires perish, religious faiths decay, and legends cling to the soil whence these mighty tokens of man's power and belief have vanished for evermore. The tales he has once loved outlive the races through whom his being is perpetuated. It seems as if the mind in which they were born had both the will and the power to confer on them a human immortality. Time, that renews the form, leaves untouched the substance of these gentle unrealities. Scarcely harmed in their progress, they come down to us, a token of the past — a strange proof that man's intellect varies as little as his physical being.

But that they survive all the perils and chances of ages also proves another truth, which is at the very root of their being. In its widest flights Romance has never forsaken humanity. It has told to man the story of man, and never seemed to imagine that there was, or might be, another tale to tell. When Homer sang the Fall of Troy before the might of Greece, we know that he meant something beyond relating the destruction of a splendid city after a ten years' siege. He meant to paint the kingly greatness of Agamemnon, the fatal beauty of Helen, the fiery wrath of heaven-born Achilles. He meant to tell us the story of man and woman: a tale which moves us yet, after the lapse of well-nigh three thousand years.

What is true of the Iliad is true of every epic, in prose or verse, written since those ancient days. The incident, however tragic, is little — the human interest is omnipotent. It is still the story of an ideal man and woman we hear and wish to hear, and through the many changes of time it is strange and touching to see with what pertinacity man has clung to that something greater than himself — that image of what he might be and is not — that noble and lofty aim ever receding before him and never reached upon earth, which is the substance of all Romance, great or small though the merit of the individual tale may be.

Less and less imaginative though fiction has become, it has never divested itself of that feature — the men and women of books are never the men and women of real life. As these are we must take them, but we require more on crossing the threshold of the imaginative world: here we want the double being — the real man and the ideal man, who walks in his steps

faithfully as his shadow. It is the tale-teller's art to see these two, and to make of both one substantial figure. Thus, whilst history — no flatterer — tells us sadly enough what the men of an age have been, cotemporary romance — more indulgent and more penetrating — goes beyond mere facts, and shews us what these men aspired to be; and in the gulf between aspiration and fulfilment we read once more the great struggle between the spirit and the flesh, which every man carries on from his birth to his grave, which is the real story of humanity.

The share of woman in transmitting this ideal history from generation to generation has ever been great.

The lays of Marie de France, the favoured poetess of Henry III. of England, opened new paths to literature. Struck with the beauty of the old Welsh and Breton tales and legends, she put them in French verse, and, through France, gave them to the world. Hers is one of the few female names that have survived with fame those ages when more was thought of what was done than of who did it — when the mighty cathedral was all, and little was cared for the memory of the builder. Hrosvita in her sacred dramas, Christine de Pisan in her poems, and the host of Provençal, French, and Italian ladies, who were not mere lyrical poetesses, who invented and narrated, also did their work in their day, and helped to float the fair vessel of romance down the stream of time. But their place is not here. We deal with modern prose fiction, and the share women have had in this is all we wish to examine.

No one need be told that the novel of to-day is a very different production from the "Amadis de Gaul" or "Morte Arthur." Without entering on the minutiae of this difference, we will simply point out two very essential features, invention and probability, in which the old and modern school of fiction are at variance. At all times the incidents of fiction have been limited, because, with all its seeming variety, the life of man is made up of sameness. But whereas imitation is all that a polished and civilized public tolerates in an author, identity of character and narrative, in short, what we would now call plagiarism, is allowed in times less refined and of knowledge less widely-spread. Fiction then passes from hand to hand like the coin of the realm — the property of none save its present master.

To this latitude we owe the tales of Chaucer, Spenser's "Fairy Queen," some of Shakespeare's finest dramas — his

"Othello" and "Romeo and Juliet," for instance. The most ancient sources were not disdained by these illustrious borrowers. After twelve hundred years, in a tale of enchantment and chivalry, in his "*Gerusalemme Liberata*," Tasso, by the wonderful birth of Bradamante, and the pathetic sorrow of the lover doomed to perish with his mistress, only revived incidents and feelings to be found in the loves of "Theagenes and Chariclea," that curious romance of the Greek Heliodorus, Bishop of Trica, in the fourth century. To this day poets claim and use the privilege, but prose has learned to submit to laws more stringent.

To this liberty, however, we owe a vast accumulation of matter that would otherwise have perished. If the Italian novelists had been bound to invent new tales instead of collecting old ones, we should have lost both the matter and the form in which these have come down. Their highly-civilized and commercial life gave the Italians little relish for the romances of a chivalry whose home was elsewhere, among sterner, ruder, and more barbarous nations. Polished and voluptuous, they chose among the popular tales of surrounding nations such as suited their own mood. Moral and virtuous lessons of courtesy, honour, and generosity, love adventures, tales, bitter, satirical, comic, and often coarse and impure, pleased them more than the grand heroic romances of their cotemporaries. The Italians were too old as a people when these were born around them to feel their loftiness and beauty. They could neither believe nor admire enough to receive them with favour. Their novella had an air of truth and nature, which made all extravagance distasteful; and wherever that novella was introduced, the chivalric romance declined.

This air of truth, this resemblance to nature, is the second grand characteristic of the modern novel, as distinguished from its heroic predecessor. Eastern fictions are exotics, and supernatural tales exceptions in the history of modern literature. Our ancestors were more imaginative than we are, and certainly more credulous. They could delight in enchantments and prodigious deeds of arms that move us not, because they have ceased to be, what with all their extravagance they once were, the reflex of belief, feeling, and manners. We require probability, whether the tale deal with history or with the lowest reality — the characters and incidents must be such as we can believe in.

The decline of the chivalrous romance was especially apparent in the sixteenth century. Spanish writers forwarded this great change; there had always been satire, and tales of low life and successful trickery had been popular for ages; but it was Mendoza, who, in his "Lazarillo de Tormes," gave a form to the picaresca school, which two centuries later was so successfully introduced into France by Lesage, and which cannot yet be considered extinct. To that school, essentially masculine, Doña Maria de Zayas e Soto Mayor does not belong. She transferred to the Spanish language the tone of the Italian novellas, and no little of their freedom, but she has no share in the modern novel. Cervantes, who gave dying chivalry its last blow, stands alone and unrivalled at the head of this branch of modern literature.

This great destroyer had a faith of his own, however; he wrote pastorals. Literature could not be made up of Lazarillos and Sancho Panzas. It had cast by its old ideal of heroic greatness; another it should have. It took one more ancient by far than that which it discarded, but which in the tumult and strife of the middle-ages had well nigh been forgotten. Pastorals revived and were written in every language. The finest were Italian. The spirit of Virgil has never died in Italy. Idylls are natives of that beautiful country, where landscape and climate make them seem a happy reality, and Tasso's "Aminta," Guarini's "Pastor Fido," have survived the taste that inspired them.

The world was soon full of the loves and sorrows of shepherds and shepherdesses, and every language could boast its own in verse and prose. The most successful in France was Honoré d'Urfé's "Astrée," which may almost be said to have opened the long and successful career of the French novel. The first volume was published in 1610, and it took fifteen years to complete the whole work, one of the most popular of its age. In this pastoral the author told, under feigned names and the veil of pastoral incidents, the history of his love for the beautiful Diane de Château-Morand. The work was dedicated to Henry IV., who liked it better than he liked the author. The love adventures of that prince were related, under the name of the "Grand Alcandre," by the Princess of Conti. She availed herself of d'Urfé's example in making fiction out of truth, but whilst she took a novelist's

latitude, she used too little of a novelist's art to claim more than passing mention.

The first genuine prose story written in French by a woman, and which can come within the group of those we mean to consider, preceded d'Urfé's "*Astrée*" by some years. It is not in itself a very remarkable work, but it is the production of a very remarkable woman, Marie le Jars de Gournay, the adopted daughter and editor of one of the greatest of French writers — Montaigne. Modern research has done much to elucidate her history, and her own works tell us clearly enough what she was. Some account of her will enable us to understand better the short work of fiction which is her claim to be mentioned here, and with which she linked the name of Montaigne.

CHAPTER I.

Mademoiselle de Gournay.

SOMEWHERE towards 1565 was the date of Marie le Jars de Gournay's birth. This eccentric lady, remarkable for the vigour of her mind, the honourable independence of her character, and the peculiarities of her temper, but more celebrated for her adopted relationship to Montaigne than for the excellence of her numerous works, has made meritorious, even though not always successful, attempts in almost every department of literature. Poetry, translations from the classics, epigrams, political treatises, essays moral and philological, proved in her own day, and during her long life, the fertility of her mind, and the industry with which she bent it to some of the pursuits that honour most our nature. If the divine fire of genius failed her, if she had not the felicitous style and happy turn of thought that win lasting fame, she had at least that intellectual honesty, and that earnest ardour in the work done, which compel respect. The earliest of her works is a novel: "The Promenoir of Montaigne," written for and dedicated to her adopted father.

Mademoiselle de Gournay's father died young; his widow left Paris and retired to Picardy with her six children, and reared her family on the remnants of a broken patrimony. A diligent housewife was that lady, and a zealous upholder of woman's domestic mission. Marie was put to her needle, and had to steal leisure for study. Alone, without masters, without even the assistance of a grammar, with nothing but French translations to help her, the young girl learned Latin. Greek she attempted, but the difficulties of the task were more than her patience could conquer.

Mademoiselle de Gournay was about twenty when the two first books of Montaigne's essays were published. They reached her, even in her dull silent home at Gournay, and filled her with admiration and delight. She acknowledges that her enthusiasm verged on excess; it was not limited to the production that had been to her the opening of a new

world, it extended to the author, even in her obscure retreat in Picardy — to see and know the southern Montaigne became with Marie de Gournay a settled and passionate desire.

Such wishes seem privileged. The deep, heartfelt joys of life are few, and we need some calm intellectual content to soothe its inevitable disappointment and heartfelt sorrows.

Mademoiselle de Gournay could do little or nothing to see Montaigne — Providence did all for her. In the year 1588, Madame de Gournay visited Paris. Her daughter Marie accompanied her. Montaigne was then there, superintending a new edition of his work. Marie de Gournay found means to let him know her admiration, and the gratification it would give her to be acquainted with him. The illustrious author was pleased with this youthful and sympathetic fervour. He called on her the next day, and offered her "the alliance and affection of a father to a daughter." Mademoiselle de Gournay eagerly accepted; and thus arose a true, innocent, and intellectual affection between the man of fifty-five and the girl of twenty-three. Montaigne saw her frequently during their mutual stay in Paris, and he even accompanied her and Madame de Gournay to their home in Picardy. He remained with them some time, enjoying and cultivating the quick and ingenious mind of his adopted daughter. They walked and conversed together, possessing in its fulness that intellectual intercourse which to both was one of the keenest joys of existence. And it was in one of those happy conversations that Marie found the groundwork of her future tale. Discouraging with Montaigne concerning the fatal effects of the passions, she related to him a history, which she afterwards put into other language, and from its origin entitled "*Le Promenoir de Montaigne*."

In 1591, Mademoiselle de Gournay lost her mother, and came to Paris; the following year brought another bitter grief, the death of Montaigne. Marie crossed all France, then distracted by civil war, to go and condole with her adopted father's widow and daughter. She remained with them more than a year, and more than sisterly love ever afterwards bound her to her lost friend's "Eléonore." On her return to Paris she prepared for the press an edition of the *Essays*, all Montaigne's papers having been placed at her disposal for that purpose.

Paris was henceforth Mademoiselle de Gournay's residence.

She was poor; she was not handsome; she resolved that good books and Montaigne's honour should be to her instead of home ties, and she devoted herself to intellectual and literary pursuits with edifying zeal. She wrote much and almost on every subject; philosophic and moral matters were her favourite themes. She did not fail either to do her best in favour of her sex, and with much warmth and some sharpness she censured those men "who despise absolutely the works of women, without deigning to read them, in order to know of what stuff they were made, and without first inquiring if they could themselves write such books as would deserve being read by all sorts of women."

Philological questions were also treated by Mademoiselle de Gournay, and with much acuteness and ability. They were then the ruling topic, and her share in the labours of her contemporaries exhibits some curious features of the times, over which we must needs linger, to render intelligible much that is to follow.

The growth of English has been remarkably free; it reached its splendor in the Elizabethan era, and the reign of another queen gave it the last delicate polish it could receive as an idiom; but the whole nation, with a few masters to lead them, may be said to share in the honour of having formed the English language. With French it has not been so. Learned men have decided that Paris and women gave its grace and purity to the French idiom. Vaugelas pronounced the ladies of his time "arbiters" in the selection of words, and to this day an educated Parisian lady is an authority in matters of speech. In the seventeenth century the authority of women took the shape of legislation, a fact the more singular that, with few exceptions, women of rank and good-breeding scarcely knew how to spell. But it is not always book knowledge that educates society — conversation and discussion form and refine minds as books never can.

After the distracting civil wars of the sixteenth century, France needed internal repose. The four years of the Fronde excepted, she found it, during the seventeenth century, one of the most glorious in her records. It was then that she produced her finest geniuses, her noblest works, her most lasting claims on the veneration of posterity. But it must not be forgotten that when Bossuet preached, when Racine wrote, they found a language already fashioned for eloquence and

verse. A few writers — society and women, who, wherever society rules, will always rule it — had prepared for them that elegant and forcible, though somewhat cold idiom, which has remained to this day the language of pure and perfect prose, the speech in which conversation can most agreeably be carried on, and ingenious ideas best expressed.

The Hôtel Rambouillet, the French Academy, and the "Précieuses," are acknowledged to have made French what it is; and in his history of polite society in France, Rœderer plainly puts the "Précieuses" on a par with the Academy, and refers the origin of both to the famous Hôtel Rambouillet. Well known though this is, we must give some account of it before we proceed; for, apart from its importance, it was the real nursery of the finest geniuses, masculine or feminine, of the seventeenth century. It was not merely the first and the most celebrated of those circles in which the French language was discussed and fixed, but it also owed its existence to one of the most accomplished women of her day, and it helped to develop the intellectual culture, and to form the taste, of all the eminent ladies of that age, who wrote either for their friends or for posterity.

We have spoken of the gross ignorance of well-born and well-bred women. It continued in France and in England until near the close of the eighteenth century. It was not unusual then for ladies of fashion not to know how to spell; but in both countries there were exceptions, and amongst those Madame de Rambouillet held a distinguished rank in France.

In the year 1600, being then no more than sixteen, the beautiful Catherine de Vivonne de Pisani, descended from the Strozzi through her mother, and by her allied to the two Queens of France, Catherine and Marie de Medici, was married to the Marquis de Rambouillet. The Hôtel Pisani, which she inherited from her father, and which stood between the Tuileries and the Louvre, took the name of Hôtel de Rambouillet, and was improved in the Italian style by the young Marchioness, who brought from her native land — she was born in Rome — a taste for palatial mansions, which two Italian Queens had already established in France.

In this home, luxurious and splendid, Madame de Rambouillet led a happy and comparatively retired life. She drew well, and loved the practice of that delightful art. She knew Italian and Spanish, and was acquainted with the best

authors in both languages. She indulged herself in theatrical representations now and then, and shunning the licentious court of Henri IV., she drew around her a chosen and agreeable circle. Princes of the blood, virtuous and accomplished ladies of high rank, savants, poets and authors, then rising from the patronage to the society of the great, mingled familiarly in the Hôtel Rambouillet. The serene beauty of the mistress of the house, her goodness, and the refined delicacy of her manners, made her universally revered and beloved. Few women won more respect, and deserved it better, than Madame de Rambouillet.

It was not her fate to do anything remarkable; she lived for her own pleasure and that of her friends; her virtues were calm and domestic; yet the love and admiration of her cotemporaries have come down to posterity, and though little personal knowledge of this amiable woman has been transmitted to us, no work of history or biography dealing with the times in which she lived would be justified in omitting her name.

Madame de Rambouillet had many children; five were daughters, and two, as they grew up, added greatly to the attractions of her society. One, Angélique, became the first wife of M. de Grignan, whose second wife was the lovely and beloved daughter of Madame de Sévigné; the other, the celebrated Julie d'Angennes, remained longer with her mother, and after keeping him waiting for fifteen years, she married the most constant of lovers, M. de Montausier. On her had latterly rested the burden of her mother's social circle, a burden to which Madame de Rambouillet's age, infirmities, and sorrows rendered her unequal. Julie's marriage removed her from Paris, the storm of the Fronde dispersed the guests, and in 1650, after lasting half a century, the Hôtel de Rambouillet may be considered extinct.

Many had been Madame de Rambouillet's guests during those fifty years; more than we can enumerate. Some of the earlier ones died before the last comers were born. Some lived through almost the whole of that half century, and could give faithful accounts of its early glories to the new generation. Amongst the princesses was that Charlotte de Montmorency, Princess of Condé, for whom Henri IV. would have gone to war had not the knife of Ravallac stopped him in his career. She came with Condé, her heroic son, and with her beautiful daughter, who, as Madame de Longueville, helped

to distract France during the civil war of the Fronde. Malherbe, Racan, Benserade and Corneille, were amongst the poets; Balzac, Voiture, St. Evremont, Ménage and Scarron, amongst the men of letters; and amongst the ladies who came on the strength of their charms and accomplishments, such women as the Comtesse de Suze, Mademoiselle de la Vergne, subsequently Madame de la Fayette, the ever-delightful Madame de Sévigné, and the once famous Mademoiselle de Scudéry, who was the personal friend and almost constant companion of Julie d'Angennes.

The conversations held in the Hôtel Rambouillet were such as may be conjectured from such guests. They were learned, polite, literary, subtle and tender. Some of Balzac's letters to Madame de Rambouillet, the continuation and result of those conversations, treat of the public greatness and private life of the Romans. On the other hand, the conjunction "for" was gravely discussed between the Marquise and Voiture, whose letters on that subject have been preserved. Thanks to them this useful word, which some zealous members of the French Academy were anxious to suppress, was preserved.

But, indeed, what matter was not broached — what argument was not discussed — in the Hôtel Rambouillet? It was there that Corneille read all his tragedies before they were acted, and that Bossuet preached his first sermon. He was scarcely sixteen when he was introduced to Madame de Rambouillet as an unknown but gifted young man, destined to the Church, and endowed with a natural eloquence, which the Marquise and her guests immediately put to the proof. A subject was given to him, and Bossuet spoke as he could speak. It was near midnight when he began, and past midnight when he ceased. Voiture declared he had never heard so early or so late a sermon, and Madame de Rambouillet prophesied the future greatness of the young preacher. Here, too, once spoke a very different orator, on themes less austere. The young Armand du Plessis, not yet the terrible Cardinal who ruled France and her master with inexorable will, appeared at the Hôtel de Rambouillet when it was in its prime, and is said to have held a thesis of love opposite that polite assembly.

We need scarcely say that the love thus expounded was of the pure ideal cast which d'Urfé's "*Astrée*" had made po-

pular, and which the sad and austere Louis XIII. afterwards practised with his platonic mistresses. It was the only love admitted at the Hôtel Rambouillet. Voiture once forgot himself so far as to press Julie's arm to his lips, but was so coldly checked as never to attempt renewing the freedom. A little exaggerated refinement pervaded the whole house; it was a reaction on much coarseness, and, like all reactions, it went too far. Madame de Rambouillet and her daughters did not merely object to indelicate expressions, which they banished indeed from their presence, and helped to banish from society, they also fastidiously exiled innocent words guilty of conveying ideas not sufficiently sublime. Thus, a gentleman having to express the meaning which lies in the word "hay," and not finding any way to do so unless by the use of that unfortunate word itself, passionately broke out into a much more objectionable "*le diable m'emporte* — there is no speaking in this house!"

But even though language might be too refined and too select in the demesnes of the noble Marquise, she erred on the safe side; and she gave, moreover, an extraordinary impulse to what, for want of another word, we must needs call style, and which, though it seems a mere matter of form, is in reality a matter of substance. To speak or write well, we must first think well — with judgment, precision, and truth. Imagination is the gift of gods, but judgment and taste mortals may lay claim to. Both Madame de Rambouillet helped to form, not merely by what she did herself, but by what she inspired others to do.

A few erudite and literary men, feeling that her assemblies, though very agreeable, were somewhat desultory, thought of meeting to discuss literary and linguistic questions, and with them began the French Academy. Cardinal Richelieu heard of their meetings, and in some sort compelled them to become a body. The labours of the new Academy were not however confined to their own members. They extended to the polite part of the nation, not that which was to be found in the galleries of royal palaces, and with whom galanterie and intrigue were the chief business of life, but that polite, intellectual, and elegant portion whose great object was the culture of the mind, and whose zeal in the cause of good language made a temporary academy of every drawing-room.

A strange passion for introducing new words, for suppress-

ing some antiquated modes of speech, for completing and polishing others, had taken possession of every circle. This labour continued till far beyond the first half of the century. The part which the "Précieuses," the inheritors of Madame de Rambouillet's spirit and power, took in this agitation was great. The "Précieuses," as their name indicates, were ladies, whom their admirers considered of so exalted a nature that no adjective meaner than "precious" could qualify them. So highly, indeed, were they esteemed, that Molière himself, though the free bent of his genius led him to detest the whole body, cautiously declared that in his "Précieuses Ridicules" he only intended, as the title of his comedy implied, to satirize the imitators of the real "Précieuses," for whom he professes a respect posterity is not bound to believe in. Whatever may now be thought of those ladies, their power was unquestionably great. At one time they numbered more than eight hundred, and Somaise, their cotemporary, wrote a dictionary, which still exists — a directory we would call it now — which contains their names and directions accurately set down. These eight hundred ladies were divided into cycles, having each a distinct life of its own. We do not require Molière's authority to know that sins of taste were committed in these assemblies; but if we remember their errors, let us also remember the incalculable benefit the "Précieuses" and their followers conferred on French literature, and on every literature that was formed on its model. For depravity and impure language, whether spoken or written, they substituted the refinement of virtue and the delicacy of good taste. To them we owe it that the French literature of their age can, with few exceptions, be read without shame in ours; that, whilst poetry and prose were almost equally profligate in England, they were comparatively pure in France. The severity of the Puritans was tyrannous, fanatic — did more harm than good; that of the elegant and refined Frenchwomen allowed all the liberty that the culture of the mind requires, and rigorously excluded what virtue and even common decency must never allow. However formal and overwrought was the French literature of that age, which became the European model, we must not forget that it saved Europe from that most shameful form of profligacy — that which man writes for man to read.

However, if those ladies refined, polished, and purified the

French language, they certainly made it cold. Free and indelicate words they rigorously banished from literature and conversation, and they introduced many figurative and elegant modes of speech that were then audacious innovations and are now current coin; but we fear that the reproach of having checked the poetic flow, and of having reduced the national language to the standard of polite conversation, may be affixed to them with truth. But few things are more characteristic of the influence of French women in literary matters than the changes in spelling which Voltaire carried out later, but which really owe their origin to the "Précieuses," and to them because they wanted to write correctly, and did not want to learn how to spell.

In one of their literary assemblies, a Madame Leroi told Leclerc, secretary of the French Academy, that spelling *must be altered*, so that women could write correctly as well as men, and that words should be written as they were pronounced. To this sensible though revolutionary proposal, M. Leclerc politely acceded. He took a pen, Madame de Ladurandière took a book, and Mesdames Leroi and de Saint Loup decided what letters should be omitted and what retained in the words which she read and he wrote. A long list of the words thus improved has been preserved by Somaise, the narrator of this anecdote.

It was in this academical labour, to explain which required this digression, that Mademoiselle de Gournay largely shared. We do not know that she ever visited the Hôtel Rambouillet, and she certainly died before the "Précieuses" were in power, but she was too learned and too zealous to be left out, or to allow herself to be excluded. The adopted daughter of Montaigne was too fond of the antiquated French in which he had written, and which she herself still used so freely as to make her patron the great Cardinal de Richelieu, smile at her expense, to see it pass away without breaking a lance in its defence. At the same time, she was too independent and too clear-sighted to object to the introduction of new and often necessary words. She certainly took a part, and an active one, in the labours of the French Academy, then recently established. A new book appeared under the title of "*Raffinage de la Cour*," but what was that word *raffinage*? Where did it come from? It was expressive, but would it pass current? Whilst Mademoiselle de Gournay was thus perplexed,

seven or eight of her academical friends, renowned *puristes*, dropped in. The word *raffinage* was submitted to them; they weighed it well and turned it over, but without coming to any decision. These severe judges declared that, before acquitting or condemning the word, they required to hear it pronounced in a clear and distinct voice at some distance. Mademoiselle de Gournay's aged maid was called in, told to stand at the further end of the room and to utter the word *raffinage*.

"The servant woman obeyed," says the narrator of this curious story, "made a deep, old-fashioned curtsy, and pronounced *raffinage* so as to make it be believed that she had a true brazen throat. They who were for this word made a favourable inclination of the head; they who were against shook it; and they who hesitated uttered a certain *hon*, pinching their lips — a proof that they were half won over. 'Once more,' said the mistress. The servant woman made a second curtsy and again pronounced *raffinage*, raising her voice two tones. 'Well,' said Mademoiselle de Gournay, turning graciously towards the gentlemen, 'what do you think of *raffinage*? For my part, I think it does not sound amiss.' 'You say well,' answered, in the name of all, one of those venerable judges. It was therefore agreed that *raffinage* should have its passport and brevet of well-bred word."

Passport and brevet have proved good to this very day. But when we see Mademoiselle de Gournay absorbed in these learned anxieties, which she did not lighten with love dissertations, like the "*Précieuses*," we must not wonder at the name of Dame Sapience which some of her cotemporaries chose to bestow upon her.

Brave in all she undertook, she did not merely defend herself from the personal attacks or reflections to which the foolish scoffers of her age subjected her growing years, her peculiarities — she had, alas! been one of the seekers of the philosophic stone — and especially her ardour for literature, she defended with vigour and zeal the cause of her sex, wrote on its wrongs, and proclaimed the moral and intellectual equality of man and woman.

Mademoiselle de Gournay could not but be esteemed; respect was not, however, always granted to the daughter of Montaigne. Strange tricks were played on her credulity. She once received a letter purporting to come from King James I. of England, and in which this learned monarch

requested the favour of her life and portrait. Mademoiselle de Gournay sent both, but we are not told what His Majesty thought of the double gift.

The hoax practised on her, and in which the poet Racan was, like herself, a victim, has been amusingly told by Talle-mant des Réaux. Mademoiselle de Gournay had sent Racan one of her works, and he was to call and thank her for it. Two of his friends, who knew both the day and the hour of his intended visit, and also that Mademoiselle de Gournay was not acquainted with his person, ventured on the following practical joke.

One of them called, and was announced as Racan. He was young, handsome, and witty, and Mademoiselle de Gournay found him delightful. He was scarcely gone when his accomplice appeared — a second Racan more charming, more agreeable than the first, whom, after some hesitation, Mademoiselle de Gournay pronounced to have been an impostor, though a very pleasant one. When this Racan was gone, the real one, a heavy, peasant-looking man, who came up breathing hard, being asthmatic, and stuttered as he spoke, made his appearance. But when he declared that he was Racan, Mademoiselle de Gournay, patient till then, lost her temper, told him he was an impostor and a stupid one; a thief to boot, and hunted him out with her slipper.

Many more amusing and humorous anecdotes are related of this good and eccentric woman, who lived long enough to be victimized by her cotemporaries, for she reached her eightieth year, and did not die till 1645. But if a few peculiarities of mind and temper afforded entertainment to the idle and the frivolous, Mademoiselle de Gournay's vigorous and cultivated intellect, her generous and warm nature, deserved to the last the tribute of affection and honour which her illustrious adopted father inscribed to her in his essays:—

“I have taken pleasure to publish in many places the hope I have conceived concerning Marie de Gournay le Jars, my daughter by alliance, and assuredly more than paternally loved by me, and held in my solitude and retreat as one of the better parts of my own being. Her only do I consider in this world. If youth can give sure tokens, this soul will one day be equal to the noblest things, and among the rest to the perfection of that most holy friendship to which we read not that her sex has yet attained.”

The opening address, no less than the title she gave her only novel, show us Mademoiselle de Gournay's veneration for her adopted father. "*Le Promenoir de Montaigne*," literally, "the walk of Montaigne," was sent to him a week or so after their parting. "You understand, my father," she wrote, "that I name this your walk, because, walking together ten days ago, I told you the following history, as it was suggested to me by our recent reading of a similar subject: that is to say, 'Plutarch's Tragical Accidents of Love.'"

And surely Plutarch never related a more tragic history than that of Alinda and Leontine. Mademoiselle de Gournay tells us that she had read it in some book or other, of which she had forgotten the title; but it reads like her own from beginning to end.

A Parthian king, having vanquished the Persian sovereign, made it one of the stipulations of peace, that he should receive in marriage the beautiful Alinda, cousin to the conquered monarch. Very reluctantly did Alinda give her consent, and agree to leave her native land for the court of the Parthian sovereign; but duty and patriotism conquered her feelings, and she set off with her father, the Satrap Oroondates. The first night of their journey was spent by the travellers in the house of an aged lord, living with his only son, "whose warlike virtues, sweet speech, and many graces rendered his youth and beauty so dangerous that their allurements seemed inevitable, and who owned a Greek name, Leontine." The perilous attractions of this handsome youth had unfortunately time to work on Alinda; for her father being taken suddenly ill, their journey was delayed, and she was exposed to Leontine's daily society. Her beauty inflamed him no less than his charmed her, and, with all the arts of love, he insinuated his feelings and wishes into her very soul. He began by pitying her destiny in leaving her country, and all that endeared it, for a foreign land.

"Happy!" he exclaimed, "the obscure and humble maidens who can enjoy for ever their dear native land — its customs, its language, early friendships, the gods of home, and the tombs of their ancestors."

Then, emboldened by the readiness with which she allowed him to pity her, he spoke of love, and finally proposed flight.

Long and bitter were Alinda's struggles, but, moved by

his prayers, still more by her own passion, she stole away with him, and sailed in a ship that left the neighbouring port. The wrath of the gods followed the fugitives; a terrible storm arose, and they were cast on a dreary shore of Thracia. Here, however, they were received and hospitably entertained by Othalcus, one of the wealthiest lords of the land, a rude hunter and warrior, who had never known love, yet whom the fatal beauty of Alinda at once subdued. Conscious that both she and the man she loved were in the barbarian's power, Alinda repulsed him as mildly as she could. Her gentleness only rendered her new lover more ardent, and he eagerly set about supplanting Leontine. Hitherto, we have only had the usual crosses of love, but Othalcus's Scythian mode of getting rid of a rival renders the story a peculiar one. Nothing more feasible occurs to him than to marry Leontine to his sister, a beautiful girl, with whom, as Othalcus well saw, his guest had from the first been struck, and who was not averse to become the wife of the handsome stranger. Leontine readily consents to the change, but dares not quite break the matter to the injured Alinda. His coldness tells her much, and an accident reveals all. "One day that she was wrapped in these melancholy thoughts, seated near a partition wall, against which she leaned her sorrowful head, she heard a secret murmur, that seemed like the voice of her Leontine; she cast her eyes round, but beholding nought save solitude, she thought this sound must come from the next room. Therefore, turning back, she looked through a sufficiently large chink, and beheld Leontine himself, and her rival, in close converse, with all the familiarity he dare assume, and so burning and so ardent, that it seemed as if he had never been so much so for her." "Alas! poor Alinda," here exclaims the author, "allow the horror and pity of thy disaster to suspend the power of speech, and let me cover my face with the veil of Timanthes."

This classical allusion to the famous picture of Iphigenia's sacrifice is quite in *Mademoiselle de Gournay's* style; it is that which mars much of the antique and poetic grace of her fine old French, and of the tenderness which, with all her strictures on passion, she cannot repress. The lamentations of poor betrayed Alinda have great sweetness. Neither in *Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, nor in *Madame de La Fayette*, with all

their superiority, shall we find anything so natural and so pathetic as Alinda's exclamation:

"Assuredly my simple youth was easily deceived, and my weakness easily trampled under foot! But what! if they deserved neither love nor justice, did they not at least deserve some pity?"

For pity, however, she does not ask — her resolve is taken, and she acts upon it with the steady calmness of a fixed despair. She informs Othalcus that she has changed her mind, and that she will become his wife, if he will but grant her a brief delay, and comply with a request of hers. An old woman of the household, whom she names, has ventured to blame her, and accuse her virtue. Let her be killed in the night! To this easy condition Othalcus gives a ready assent: assassins are procured, and the hour for the deed is appointed. Having first written a pathetic letter to the faithless Leontine, Alinda steals to the old woman's room, warns her of her peril, and, as soon as she has fled in terror, takes her place. What she wished for and anticipated happens. She is killed instead of the intended victim, and Othalcus, coming to learn if the deed is done, finds his future wife a corpse. Leontine, too, comes in search of Alinda, and throwing himself on her body, vainly attempts to restore her to life. His inconstancy and cruelty now fill him with the deepest despair.

"Ye beautiful eyes, that saw so plainly the ingratitude and the treason of Leontine," he exclaims, "will ye not for a moment behold his repentance?"

In a transport of grief, he draws forth his dagger and stabs himself to the heart. The two lovers are buried in one grave, by the sorrowing Othalcus and his sister; and thus ends this tragical accident of love.

It was well liked by Mademoiselle de Gournay's contemporaries, and went through several editions; but is chiefly valuable to us as being the first genuine modern novel written in French by a woman. Its stiffness, its quaintness, its antique cast, are illustrations of the lingering pedantry of times when learning flooded the fair plains of literature.

CHAPTER II.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry.

THE name of Mademoiselle de Scudéry has remained on record as a striking and memorable instance of the vicissitudes inherent to literary fame. What was she not in her own day? — what is she now in ours? Her fifty volumes of poetry and prose were the delight of the most exquisitely polished society France has yet known; for elegant pleasures and refined conversations were its great occupation. They were translated into every European language, and found their way, it is asserted, into Eastern tongues. Her discourse on Glory won the first prize of eloquence bestowed by the French Academy, and she replaced Helen Cornaro amongst the Ricovrati of Padua. None of the women who have written during the last two centuries received more honours, more flattering distinctions, and more substantial rewards than fell to the lot of Madeleine de Scudéry. Madame de Staël alone has been more influential since then, but she has not been more famous. Her fame, indeed, instead of decreasing with time, has assumed that calm power which promises that it shall be enduring; but her influence, and much of her celebrity, sprang from two sources, which poverty and universal love closed on Mademoiselle de Scudéry. One was born poor, wrote for her daily bread, and kept aloof from the political contests of her day. The other, the daughter of a wealthy and popular minister, the personal enemy of Napoleon, reared in stirring times, full of ardour and passion in her opinions, waged no contemptible war against the mightiest of sovereigns; and to her prominent position, and that long enmity, more than to her fine genius, she owed her world-known celebrity. But little has it availed Mademoiselle de Scudéry that she once delighted fine minds and delicate wits. Two hundred years have scarcely passed since she wrote that famous "Clelia," which, with its map of the kingdom of Tenderness, has proved so fatal to her name. "Clelia," celebrated by the sarcasms of Boileau and Molière, two pitiless enemies, and powerful as they were pitiless, and which the world knows now by their anathemas — for what

they spared it has forgotten. And yet, when it appeared at the sign of the "Palm," in the mercer's gallery of the old Palais de Justice, the great publishing world of the day, it got as cordial a welcome as Corinne or Cecilia ever excited in the last age. Princesses received with transport every one of its ten volumes — for it took years to appear; fine ladies and fastidious gentlemen — ay, even Boileau himself, then a young man — lingered with delight over those seven thousand pages of lively or tender controversy. And now — strange and pitiable contrast! — it would take years, a lifetime perhaps, to collect a complete edition of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's works in that city where her fame reached its fulness; saddest of all, her name has remained as a by-word with a posterity that has never cared to read her, and a few sins of taste have condemned irretrievably one of the most ingenious, delicate, and refined minds that ever were reflected in fiction.

Amongst the causes which have led to this result three are pre-eminent: Mademoiselle de Scudéry's tales were too long; she gave to Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans the manners and feelings of her own times; Boileau and Molière ridiculed her. If her tales had been short, and not in ten volumes a-piece — if she had dropped historical narratives, which she only disfigured, and had professed to give us the men and women of her own day, neither Molière nor Boileau, with all the genius of the one and the bitterness of the other, could have inflicted upon her an enduring stigma.

However, it is useless to speculate, her life will shew us indeed how she was led into those literary sins which have cost her so dear; but the decrees of posterity are, like those of fate, irrevocable; and though we will endeavour to make clear how, spite some errors, Mademoiselle de Scudéry could charm and delight the most cultivated minds of her own age, and can still be read with entertainment and profit in ours, we do not mean to say that if the sentence pronounced against her ought, in common justice, to be softened and better understood, it need or should be reversed.

The family of the Scudérys was of Neapolitan descent. This illustrious, ancient, and warlike race had, however, long been settled in Provence, and M. de Scudéry, father of the two authors, was governor of the Havre-de-Grace, where his daughter Madeleine was born in the year 1607. She lost her mother in early youth, and was confided to an uncle, who,

struck with her lively, active, and inquiring mind, educated her with the greatest care. He was himself a man of polished and cultivated taste; he had spent the greatest part of his life at Court, and even in his retirement in Normandy he saw the best society that province then afforded. Madeleine's education was not merely intellectual, though she studied Italian and Spanish, which she knew thoroughly, and read the best authors of every language, it was also conversational, if we may so speak; and only one to whom the use of the subtle and delicate arguments then in fashion had been early familiar, could have introduced so many ingenious digressions, or drawn so many agreeable portraits, as those with which she afterwards adorned her works.

But Mademoiselle de Scudéry was not satisfied with mere literary knowledge — dancing, drawing, painting, music, and needlework were included in her education. What she was not taught she learned of her own accord, and thus became acquainted with agriculture, gardening, cookery, house-keeping, and medicine — she even acquired no mean proficiency in the lady-like art of concocting potions, perfumes, and distilled waters, and was evidently resolved that no feminine accomplishment should escape her.

The splendour of the Scudérys had long been declining, and the death of her uncle appears to have left Mademoiselle de Scudéry destitute. She came to Paris and took up her abode with her brother George, the author, and assuredly a most curious specimen of the literary gentleman. His rhodomontades, his quarrelsome temper, his honorable pride, and his bad verses, with occasional flashes of genius, made him a literary curiosity, even in his own times. He was a few years older than Madeleine, and very different from his lively yet modest and sensible sister. He wrote tragedies, which the powerful patronage of Cardinal Richelieu opposed to the master-pieces of Corneille. Epic poems, harangues, and translations are included in the list of his works; he was also a soldier, Governor of Nôtre-Dame de la Garde, a post of more honour than worth, and he had a tone of chivalry, romance, and bombast, which was ridiculous in form, though in reality based on true honour. He boasted that he came of a race that stuck feathers in their hats, and rarely turned them into quills; also, that he had used more matches to light his musket than to light his candles, and that he knew better how to

arrange columns in the field than on paper, and to square battalions than to round periods. But it should not be forgotten that, with all his absurdity, George de Scudéry had none of that venality which dishonoured men of letters in his age; and the promise of his protectress, Christina of Sweden, to give him a chain of five hundred livres if he would efface from his poem of "Alaric" the praise he had therein bestowed on her discarded favourite, the Count of Gardie, only won from him the indignant declaration, "that if the chain of gold were as weighty as that mentioned in the history of the 'Incas,' he would never destroy any altar on which he had once sacrificed." This answer, heroic in a needy man, was not the only instance of lofty-mindedness in the life of George de Scudéry. But he was poor, a sin the world rarely forgives. He wrote much and badly. Boileau said of him —

*"Bien heureux Scudéry dont la fertile plume
Peut tous les mois sans peine enfanter un volume."*

Neither wealth nor rank guarded him from ridicule, and, with nothing but indomitable vanity to support him in the unequal contest, he became the open prey of wits and satirists.

To this striving brother came Madeleine de Scudéry, somewhere between her thirtieth and her fortieth year. It was not her first visit to Paris. From her youth she had been the friend and companion of Madame de Rambouillet's daughter Julie, and she was still and ever a welcome guest at the Hôtel Rambouillet; but it does not appear that, though living in such an atmosphere of literature, she attempted composition until necessity compelled her to do so. M. de Scudéry was too poor, however, to keep his sister in idleness; marriage was not to be thought of for a plain and portionless girl, and quickly perceiving that neither dancing nor her other accomplishments were likely to avail her much, he judiciously turned to good account Madeleine's lively wit and ready pen. There were, moreover, heavy family debts to discharge, and Mademoiselle de Scudéry loyally took her share of the burden. Her brother gave her subjects for romances in the grand historical style, such as suited his highflown imagination and the taste of the day, and these she treated according to her own fancy.

She saw French society in all its elegant and somewhat extreme refinement, and she painted what she saw. Madame de Rambouillet, her daughter and her guests, figured in the

"Grand Cyrus," as well as Condé and Madame de Longueville. She described real places, dwellings, and people. The disquisitions on love, friendship, politeness, and every possible feeling which she heard around her, she transferred to her pages, with such additions and improvements as her taste and fancy suggested. Whether such conversations suited her Assyrian heroes, her Greek ladies, poets, and philosophers, she did not care much, nor did her cotemporaries. Every one knew that the past was but a convenient cloak for the present; that the old heroic names or classical events were as conventional in their way as the Geronte, Leander, or Araminta of the stage, and its set of incidents. But beneath that veil of fiction every one also knew that there lay truths and realities.

Her readers were delighted to recognize themselves, their friends, and their enemies, painted to the very life in her pages. It was pleasant for those who could test the truth of her representations, and no less interesting for such as inferior rank excluded from the great world, to know that Mandane was Madame de Longueville, that the great Condé was Cyrus, that Christina of Sweden was painted under the name of Cleobulina, Ninon de l'Enclos as Clarice, that Scarron and his wife, the future Madame de Maintenon, were Scaurus and Lyriane — Madame de Rambouillet, Cléomire — and her daughter, Julie d'Angennes, Philonide. The long description of Cléomire's palace had a charm for every reader; for every one knew that it was the Hôtel Rambouillet — that the rooms, pictures, and very couches were those of the celebrated and accomplished Marquise. Many a provincial girl sighed as she read of those splendors *she* must never hope to see; many a faded beauty or exiled courtier lingered with regret over the page that recorded the scene of past triumphs. We can imagine the heart-burning with which Bussy de Rabutin must have thrown the book from him, in his weary banishment of forty years; or the curious and amused commentary of Saint Evremont and the beautiful Duchess of Mazarin in England, when that volume of "Cyrus" reached them in their philosophic retirement within the shadow of Whitehall. And there were battles, too, in that "Grand Cyrus," French battles and victories, recorded under ancient names by the patriotic Mademoiselle de Scudéry.

The siege of Cumæ was the siege of Dunkerque; the battle

of Lens took the name of Thybarra; and the famous Rocroi, Condé's great triumph, was described as won by Cyrus over the Massagetæ.

As a general rule, the persons introduced in Mademoiselle de Scudéry's works were as well pleased to be there as readers were to find them in it.

"You cannot imagine how pleased the ladies are to be in her novels," writes Tallemant des Réaux, "or rather to have their portraits in them; for their characters only, not their actions, must be looked for."

Some resented the distinction, however. Madame Cornuel, so celebrated for her satirical wit — it was she who first uttered the memorable saying, that no man is a hero to his own valet — was angry to find herself portrayed as Zenocrite, in the "Grand Cyrus." An epigram on the analogy between ink and Mademoiselle de Scudéry's complexion proved her wrath to the offender. The austere Messieurs du Port Royal were more placable, and the volume of "Clelia" in which they were introduced was read with much interest in their pious retreat.

Though Mademoiselle de Scudéry was well known to be the author of these works, they appeared under her brother's name. Under his close superintendence they were certainly written. This gentleman had strong ideas on the subject of fraternal rights and authority, for he was in the habit of locking up his sister, to keep her to her task. The lady was of a gay and lively disposition, and often made her escape. She was fond of going out, of visiting, of pleasure parties, of conversation and amusement. All his rigour and efforts kept her little within doors. It became a matter of wonder how this fertile writer found leisure for the endless volumes that flowed from her pen. But, indeed, society supplied her with characters, incidents, and dialogue. Never was mind less troubled with invention than that which produced romances of ten volumes a piece, and fifteen hundred pages a volume.

George de Scudéry helped her a little. Traces of his interference can be found in the military portions of her works, and there are certainly more battles and more fighting in those she wrote whilst they were together than in her subsequent productions. Such as his share was, however, he would not have it alluded to, or his entire authorship disputed. La Calprenède, author of the "Cléopâtre," and other forgotten romances, telling him once, in the presence of his sister, that he

had not written the "Cyrus," George flew at him, and if Madeleine had not thrown herself between them, like one of her own heroines, an immediate encounter must have ensued. A journey to Normandy, and his marriage in that province with a very agreeable lady who fell in love with him, as the author of "Ibrahim" and the "Grand Cyrus," rid Mademoiselle de Scudéry of her brother. It is said that Madame de Scudéry long refused to believe her husband when he assured her that his sister was the real author of the works which had so charmed her.

Similar good fortune befell La Calprenède. A pretty widow was so smitten with his "Cléopâtre," then in progress — it appeared in volumes, as was then the custom, and he took twelve years to finish it — that she married him; but lest he should cheat her out of her story, she made him sign a written promise that he would complete it, and his promise was inserted with due form in the marriage contract. The publisher of the "Cléopâtre" must have felt very much obliged to Madame de la Calprenède for this stipulation, for, in order to get money out of him, this not very scrupulous author had threatened not to complete "Cléopâtre" under thirty volumes, instead of ten; and it was long a matter of doubt whether he would ever finish it.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry, being now free, saw whomsoever she liked, and wrote at her pleasure. Her life was long and happy; her admirable patience with her jealous and eccentric brother had won her general esteem, and her good sense and modesty made her many friends. She certainly had the art of passing through life; and though she was criticised as a writer, she never had a personal enemy. That universal scandal-monger, Tallemant des Réaux, merely says of her, that she had a magister way of speaking, and laughs at her family pride. "She was in the habit of saying, 'since the ruin of our family!' One would fancy she meant the overthrowing of the Greek Empire." If that was her weakness, it was a common one in her age, and perhaps, too, a necessary one in her case. Mademoiselle de Scudéry required some barrier to set between a poor plain woman, addicted to literature, and the natural insolence of the rich and the great. From personal vanity she was entirely free. She was ugly; she knew it, and said it frankly. When the celebrated Nan-

teuil improved her face, in the crayon portrait he drew of her, she sent him the pretty verse: —

"Nanteuil en faisant mon image,
A de son art divin signalé le pouvoir,
Je hais mes yeux dans mon miroir,
Je les aime dans son ouvrage."

Mademoiselle de Scudéry was an agreeable poet, and could deride in verse what she preached in prose.

Amongst her female friends was Mademoiselle de la Vigne, a beautiful girl, twenty-seven years her junior, and who felt for the illustrious Sappho — as she was called — a sort of impassioned admiration. A pretty correspondence in rhyme once passed between them.

Mademoiselle de la Vigne petitioned the King, in the name of Parisian lovers, to check the audacity of thieves, who greatly interfered with their stolen evening visits.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry took up her pen, and, in the name of the Parisian thieves, boldly declared that the race of lovers was extinct, by night as well as by day — that their midnight excursions for the last ten years had never once produced one of those portraits set with diamonds which were formerly their customary booty, and instead of which they now and then found a wretched madrigal. A handsome present of jewels, with some pretty stanzas, both supposed to be sent by the thieves, was Mademoiselle de la Vigne's reply, but did not close the correspondence, which Hoffmann turned into one of his most gloomy stories.

Later, when Mademoiselle de Scudéry, by her discourse on Glory, had the honour of winning the first prize bestowed by the French Academy, Mademoiselle de la Vigne again took up her pen, and, in the name of the ladies, wrote a grateful ode, in which this triumph of woman was commemorated. Mademoiselle de la Vigne's poems have long been forgotten, and only two quatrains of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's are still familiarly known: that which she addressed to Nanteuil, and that which she carved on the walls of the great Condé's prison in Vincennes, where the illustrious captive amused himself with growing carnations.

"En voyant ces œuillets qu'un illustre guerrier
Arrosa d'une main qui gagnait des batailles,
Souviens toi qu'Apollon bâtissait des murailles
Et ne t'étonne pas si Mars est jardinier."

Mademoiselle de Scudéry's fidelity to the Condés in their calamities was the more honourable to her, that she blamed their politics. Both she and her brother persisted in dedicating all the volumes of the "Grand Cyrus" to Madame de Longueville; she received the first in her prosperity, and the rest in her sorrows. The four years so calamitous to her had produced no change in the high-minded Scudéry's; and with a frankness that did him infinite credit, the governor of La Garde sent the fourth volume of "Cyrus" to Condé in his prison. Whether he was too indiscreet in his zeal, or whether mere adherence to a fallen power was thought worthy of punishment, he was for some time exiled in Normandy, in consequence of his fidelity.

More interesting to us than her verses are Mademoiselle de Scudéry's letters. They are unfortunately very few. Those addressed to Godeau, Bishop of Vence, are valuable to the historian. They were written during the troubles of the Fronde, and for the express purpose of giving her friend political information. Others, of a purely private nature, are so lively, amusing, and so different from the general tone of her works, as to prove once more how hard it is to be as easy and natural in our writings as we are in daily life.

The governor of La Garde once went to Marseilles, and his sister accompanied him. In a letter, addressed to Mademoiselle de Chalais, and dated December 13th, 1644, Mademoiselle de Scudéry complains of the dulness of Marseillaise society, and frankly makes the following acknowledgment:

"I confess to you I am not stupid enough to like the company of stupid people, and my mind is not so well furnished as to supply me with resources. I have remained in a certain state of mediocrity, which lets me feel the evil, but does not enable me to overcome it." Then comes the following half-kindly, half-satirical portrait of a learned young Marseillaise lady. "Allow this historical comparison to one who would not have written it fifty leagues nearer to Paris, but who thinks she can indulge herself with this way of speaking in a town where a young and handsome girl quotes, in familiar talk, Trismegistus, Zoroaster, and other gentlemen with whom I am not personally acquainted. Seriously, it is a great pity this person has not been brought up in the world; she has certainly the finest woman's nature I have ever found

in the provinces. She is, as I have said, young, handsome, and of a good carriage; she talks French as if she were born in Paris, and is naturally eloquent. She knows Spanish, Italian, Latin, and even Greek; she is very gentle, very polite, and of good family, yet because she has not the art of concealing part of the treasures she possesses from people unacquainted with their value, they take gold and diamonds for glass and brass. So great is the injustice with which she is treated, that I shall not venture to see her often, lest public animadversion should reach me too."

The last trait is characteristic; where honour was not at stake, Mademoiselle de Scudéry was too prudent to quarrel with the world and its opinions. It gives us a key to her literary weakness and success. She wrote badly, because the taste of the majority was bad — and she succeeded, because she pleased that taste. Her dislike of learned ladies, however, was quite sincere; and whilst she always argued in favour of female education, she never ceased to talk and write against female pedantry, to plead for modesty and moderation.

Before proceeding to Marseilles, Mademoiselle de Scudéry and her brother had gone to Rouen, and the account of their journey, which the former gave to her friend, Mademoiselle Robineau, who had asked for it, is both graphic and amusing.

"I shall give you no exact description of my magnificent equipage," she says gaily, "although it is, no doubt, very pleasant to imagine that the four horses which drew the triumphal car on which I was borne, were all of colours as different as those of the rainbow. The first was bay, the second piebald, the third roan, and the fourth grey. The whole four were such as would suit painters anxious to prove their knowledge of anatomy; for not a bone, nerve, or muscle but could be traced in the bodies of these rare animals. Their temper was meek, and their step so slow and regular that no cardinal in Rome ever went more leisurely to a consistory than I went to Rouen. I can assure you, too, that the coachman felt so much respect for them as to walk on foot nearly the whole of the way, lest he should inconvenience them."

Then follows an account of the company gathered in this strange vehicle.

"We had a young fellow disguised as a soldier, and whose face did not match over-well with a scarlet cloak and large

gold buttons, heavy boots, and big stockings; for with all the apparel of a cheveu-léger or a swindler, he was very like a hunter of law-suits. Near this one was a bad musician, who, fearing lest he should starve in Paris, was going to beg in his own country; and though a good many people had provided him with clothing, he looked none the better for it. His head was so small that the hat he wore, and which had belonged formerly to M. de Saint Brisson, I believe, fell down over his eyes; his collar was like a mantle, his doublet had deep flaps, and his trunk and hose were very much like those of the Swiss. In short, more than one age and nation had their share in this strange apparel. The third person of our company was a bourgeoisie of Rouen, who had lost a law-suit in Paris, and who complained equally of the injustice of her judges, and of the mud in the streets. The fourth was a grocer, of the Rue Saint Antoine, who had more than twelve rings on her fingers, and travelled to see the country and the sea, as she said. The fifth, her aunt, was a tallow-chandler, of the Rue Michel le Comte, who, urged by curiosity, was going with her, in order to see the citadel of Hâvre. The sixth was a young student returning from Bourges, to take his license, and already preparing to plead his first cause. The seventh was a cowardly bourgeois, who took whatever he saw for robbers, and no sooner perceived at a distance shepherds and flocks of sheep than he prepared to surrender his purse. The eighth was a wit, from Lower Normandy, who uttered more conceits than the Abbé de Franquetot, when they were fashionable, and who, wanting to laugh at the rest of the company, gave more food for laughter than all the rest. The ninth was my brother; and I should have painted for you, not his appearance, profession, and dress, but his weariness and impatience at finding himself in this strange vehicle, if, by exacting from my good nature that I should not so mention it to you, he had not struck out this portion of my narrative.

"So select an assembly will convince you that the conversation was very entertaining. The partisan, though anxious to be concealed, always came back to the penny in the pound. The musician, though his voice was a greater nuisance than the noise of the wheels, persisted in singing. The bourgeoisie, who had lost her law-suit, did not cease to curse her lawyer. The grocer, so anxious to look at the country, slept the whole

day long, except when it was dinner-time, or we had to go down hills. The tallow-chandler could not weary admiring the pleasure she should have in seeing the vast quantity of wicks and candles said to be in the stores of the citadel; sometimes she wished she had as many in her shop — other times, that it was she who provided the garrison. Indeed, it can be said that we left the coach very honourably, drums beating through the voice of our musician, and match lit through the care of our tallow-chandler, who, so long as we travelled by night, always held a candle to light us within. As to the young student, he talked but of written law, customs, and Cujas. . . . If war was mentioned, he said he would rather be a disciple of Cujas than a soldier; if the discourse turned on travelling, Cujas was known everywhere; if music was the subject, Cujas's reasoning was more correct than the notes of music; if eating was spoken of, he vowed he would rather fast for ever than never read Cujas; if fine women were discussed, he said that Cujas had had a handsome daughter, and that, though old now, she was not ugly yet. . . . As to the coward, you can easily imagine that his conversation was not like a Gascon's (that is to say, boasting); and that the wit's recalled a good deal that of the late M. de Nerveze.

"I arrived in Rouen, not as Chapelain magnificently says, speaking of the moon,

'Within a silver car, by stars surrounded,'

But verily,

'Within an osier car, by mud surrounded.'

"After describing it to you in such colours, I scarcely venture to let you know that I remembered you in such a place, lest, having a dainty imagination, you should take it amiss that even your image should have been in so low a spot. But to comfort you under this, I must tell you that there was as much of good company in my heart as there was of bad in the coach; for, lest these strange figures should make any impression upon it, I had filled it with Mademoiselle Paulet, with M. de Grasse, with Madame de l'Arragonès and her sisters, with M. Chapelain, M. Conrart, Mademoiselle de Chalais, M. de la Mesnardière, and with Madame and Mesdemoiselles de Clermont, and you."

Little wonder that this agreeable lady, and pleasant correspondent, should have been sought for on every side. It has

been recorded that, when foreign princes came to Paris, to see Mademoiselle de Scudéry was one of their first objects. We can believe it, when we know that the fine mind of Leibnitz sought, as an honour, the privilege of corresponding with her. She had the happy art to charm the light, the graceful, and the gay, no less than the wise; that lovely Henrietta of England, who, under the name of Madame, has left so melancholy and brief a story, prettily said to her, in allusion to Mademoiselle de Scudéry's unobtrusive manners,

"It is I who am the lover in our intercourse, for it is I who have to seek you mysteriously."

Pride and vanity would have been almost pardonable in one so universally courted.

Her books were read and admired by the whole world, and the most distinguished amongst her cotemporaries praised both them and the author in language which shows but too forcibly how unstable is the tenure of literary reputation. She had already reached old age when Madame de Sévigné wrote to her:—

"In a hundred thousand words I could only tell you a truth which is equivalent to assuring you, Mademoiselle, that I must ever love and adore you. That word alone can express my opinion of your extraordinary merit. It is often the subject of my admiration, and of the happiness I have in having some share in the friendship and esteem of such a person."

Madame de Sévigné was not, however, blind to the defects of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's works, for in a letter to her daughter she thus alludes to the "Conversations" which Mademoiselle de Scudéry had extracted from her novels and published separately:—

"Mademoiselle de Scudéry has just sent me two small volumes of 'Conversations;' they cannot but be good when they are not drowned in her great novel."

These 'Conversations' were the delight of Madame de Maintenon, who recommended them to her adopted children of St. Cyr. The learned Madame Dacier was enchanted with them, and expressed her admiration in a letter, still extant, but which, like that of Madame de Brinon, superior of Saint Cyr, is too long to quote.

Spite the mistrust with which novels had long been considered, or perhaps for that very reason, Mademoiselle de Scu-

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déry's strictly moral productions were highly in favour with some of the most eminent members of the Gallican Church.

In his essay on novels, prefixed to Madame de la Fayette's "Zaïde," Huet, afterwards Bishop of Avranches, observes, with regard to Mademoiselle de Scudéry, that she was "as illustrious for her modesty as for her merit," and that, by writing under a name not her own, she seemed to "labour for the glory of her nation, and to spare the pride of the male sex. The example of so wise and virtuous a lady this learned man considered conclusive in favour of novel-writing by persons of every station of life. At the age of twenty he wrote one himself, entitled "Le Faux Incas;" and in support of his assertion he quoted many illustrious names, from Athenagoras down to Saint John Damascene, whom he ranked amongst the authors of fiction. But whatever his admiration for Mademoiselle de Scudéry may have been, Huet wrote for a purpose, and we can place more faith in the private letters of Mascarón and Fléchier than in his arguments.

In the year 1672 the former wrote to her a letter, in which the following passage occurs:—

"My autumn occupation is to read 'The Grand Cyrus,' 'Clelia,' and 'Ibrahim.' These works possess all the charm of novelty for me, and I find in them so many things calculated to set the world right, that I freely acknowledge to you, you will frequently be with St. Augustine and St. Bernard in the sermons I am preparing for the Court."

Three years later, he wrote to Mademoiselle de Scudéry, to inform her that he was to preach at the Carmelite convent on the death of Turenne, and, being pressed for time, he entreated her to help him with a few suggestions.

"You can help me over this difficulty," he writes, "if you will but have the goodness to think of what you would say if you were in this office. I entreat you most earnestly to think over this, and I know whom I address."

Fléchier, thanking her for two volumes of the "Conversations," thus expressed himself:—

"I wanted reading so delightful to rest me from the fatigues of a journey, and save me from the *ennui* of indifferent company. . . . Indeed, Mademoiselle, it seems to me that you ever increase in wit. Everything is so full of reason, so polished, so moral, and so instructive, in the two volumes you have done me the favour of sending me, that I am sometimes

tempted to distribute copies of them in my diocese, to edify the good, and to give a good example of morality to those who preach it."

No doubt there is a good deal of politeness in this flattering language, but there is truth also. But if we want genuine extravagant praise we must to go *Ménage*. In all that she has borrowed from the ancients he declares that Mademoiselle de Scudéry has surpassed them.

"Our value for her works is the test of our taste. As for their length, Homer and Virgil are long too; and '*Clelia*' and '*Cyrus*' are epic poems in plan and detail — poems destined to outlive all criticism."

For if Mademoiselle de Scudéry was admired and read with transport, she was also criticised with some severity. Tallemant des Réaux said she had done more to spoil the French language than any other writer living; he liked her stories, however. Boileau liked neither the style nor the matter of these unfortunate tales; and his dislike of them was so well-known, that Segrais observed, "That Despréaux can only talk about himself and criticise others. Why talk ill of Mademoiselle de Scudéry as he does?"

Spite all criticism, Mademoiselle de Scudéry enjoyed, however, some of the substantial rewards of literature. Courbé, the publisher of her works, made a fortune by them: the share of M. de Scudéry and his sister is estimated to have been considerable. The '*Grand Cyrus*' went through many editions, and brought Courbé in no less than a hundred thousand crowns — a large sum for the times, for any times, indeed.

Her prosperity enabled Mademoiselle de Scudéry to cease writing when the public taste forsook ten-volume romances; and even before she relinquished authorship, she had leisure and means enough to open her house in the Marais to a large circle of friends. It was when death and the chances of life had dispersed the chosen society that had once met in the Hôtel Rambouillet, that Mademoiselle de Scudéry had her Saturdays. The names of the ladies, bourgeois and grandes dames, who met at her house, with a few literary and agreeable men, have been preserved, but tell us little now. We know more of those Saturdays from the "*Clélie*" than even from the manuscript accounts which zealous friends kept, lest so much wit should be lost, and which inquisitive posterity takes up

now and then with censure and wonder. The famous map *du Tendre* was first invented on those Saturday evenings when the ladies discussed love, metaphysics, and dressed dolls in Paris fashions, to send to their provincial friends. Chapelain, Boileau's future victim, advised Mademoiselle de Scudéry to make use of it. Péliссon, the faithful and courageous adherent of the unfortunate Fouquet, was made a citizen of the *Tendre* by the mistress of that gentle kingdom. In plain speech, a Platonic love was agreed upon between him and Mademoiselle de Scudéry. Both were poor, more than usually plain, and both had passed youth. They felt that marriage was not for them, though a friendship very like love, or a love bordering on friendship, might be indulged in with safety and honour. M. Cousin, in his interesting analysis of the "Grand Cyrus," considers the following passage relating to Sappho and Phaon, as an allusion to this agreement between Péliссon and his mistress:—

"They even agreed on the conditions of their love; for Phaon solemnly promised Sappho, who wished it to be so, never to require more than the possession of her heart from her, and she also promised never to receive any one else in hers."

It was no doubt before this agreement that Conrart, another of the Saturday evening guests, had some hopes of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's favour. Péliссon was preferred, though to Conrart's care we are indebted for our knowledge of that "*Journée des Madrigaux*" which has somewhat unjustly been considered a fair representative of those once celebrated meetings. They were held in academical form; Péliссon was secretary, Conrart was entrusted with the archives, and preserved them most conscientiously. From these archives we learn that on Saturday, 20th December, 1653, Mademoiselle de Scudéry's friends were seized with a versifying fit, the results of which were so momentous that the day was entitled "*La Journée des Madrigaux*." From the *salon*, the rhyming mania went down to the kitchen. A squire distinguished himself with a *bout rimé* sonnet, and "a tall footman composed at least a dozen of burlesque verses."

Such encounters of wit were common in those days; and even a hundred years later, a passage in Madame Riccoboni's letters of Madame de Sancerre, shows us that fashionable ladies had not yet left off making bad verses in company.

"Let us make verses against our friends and against ourselves," exclaims the lively Madame de Martigue, "and let us not spare ourselves, that we may honestly abuse others."

"The proposal is received with transport. We each take a pen, become thoughtful, and do our best. One taps the floor with her foot, another passes her fingers through her hair — I know not where to begin; nothing stops Madame de Martigue, her pen flies," &c.

We may bear with patience Mademoiselle de Scudéry's "*Journée des Madrigaux*," when we see that a century had not conquered this passion for rhyme, in the bosoms of the great-great-grand-daughters of the "*Précieuses*."

Eight years after this pleasant day, of which he left a half-serious, half-mirthful record, Péliisson was included in the ruin of his patron, Fouquet, and entered the Bastille, where he spent five years. A tame spider was his companion and friend during this long and sad captivity. Unconquered by adversity, he wrote, in favour of his unfortunate master, memoirs which have remained celebrated for their boldness and eloquence. His writing materials were the lead which he took from his window, and the blank leaves which he tore out of his books. He also composed a long poem, entitled "*Eurymédon*," which he dedicated to Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and in which he addresses her as Sappho, and his comforter under affliction. Friendship is always ingenious, and especially the friendship of woman; Péliisson was allowed no intercourse with his friends, yet Mademoiselle de Scudéry never ceased to write to and to hear from him. A sweep was one of her messengers. Péliisson had had the small-pox, and his eyes had remained weak; foreseeing that the smoke would hurt him, and that he would ask his chimney to be swept, she bribed the sweep to deliver the prisoner a letter. When those means failed, others were found.

Péliisson was set at liberty in 1666, and from disgrace raised to favour and prosperity. He became a Catholic, a zealous convert, and went beyond Mademoiselle de Scudéry in religious fervour. He died in 1693.

In her "*Clélie*" we find the following flattering portrait of this favoured lover, drawn by her under the name of Herminius: —

"All the inclinations of Herminius were noble. His heart

was liberal, tender, impassioned — his temper gentle, polite, officious, complaisant — his mind suited to every task, and able to invent a hundred pleasant, agreeable, and innocent deceits to amuse his friends. Moreover, though he was infinitely wise, and even grave with those he was not free with, he had, when he wished it, a gay, polite, and witty turn of mind; but he concealed it from such as he did not like, and his mirth might confidently be taken as a mark of his esteem and affection. He wrote so elegantly letters of all sorts, and he composed verses with so much facility and excellence, that Amilcar was convinced all Greece had not a more polite, elegant, and graceful mind than that of Herminius."

Sore, indeed, must have been the loss of so accomplished, even though so plain, a lover. The sorrows inseparable from a long life beset Mademoiselle de Scudéry's old age. She survived almost all her friends, and paid the inevitable penalty of reaching ninety-four. But all that could soften so prolonged an existence was granted to her. To the last she received distinctions, honours, and munificent proofs of the value set on her person and her writings. Even whilst she was with her brother, presents from anonymous friends often dropped in of a morning; and when she was alone, pensions from crowned heads were one of the substantial acknowledgments her merit received. Christina of Sweden gave her a pension and her portrait. Cardinal Mazarin left her an annuity by his testament. Chancellor Boucherat granted her another, which his successor confirmed; and, finally, Louis XIV., on the solicitation of Madame de Maintenon, gave her, in 1683, a pension of two thousand livres, which she enjoyed eighteen years.

She had long been ailing when she took cold in the spring of 1701. Some injudicious religious austerities in which she persisted, spite her advanced years, helped the complaint. She rose as usual on the morning of the second of June, but was soon seized with faintness. She felt that her hour was come, and with great firmness said, "*Il faut mourir.*" She asked for her crucifix, embraced it, and gazed at it long, uniting herself to the sufferings and the passion of Christ. Her confessor was sent for, but she was too deaf to heed or hear him; he put the crucifix in her hands, as the most eloquent of all exhortations in that last hour. It was heavy, and one of the persons present attempted to take it from her, but

her dying hands clasped it firmly; she pressed it to her bosom. and gently expired, whilst the priest was in the act of giving her absolution.

There is something in that calm, resigned, and religious death which crowns nobly and fitly a life long, pure, and honorably spent. Mademoiselle de Scudéry's works have long ceased to be read, and may have deserved their fate; but if she unfortunately helped to pervert the literary taste of her age — or rather if she had not power, genius, and originality enough to reform it — she conferred incalculable benefits on the moral tone of literature. She put into books what Madame de Rambouillet and the "Précieuses" had introduced into society — modesty, and with modesty she helped to develope a purer moral feeling than she had found before her.

So great was the esteem in which she was held to the day of her death, that two churches of Paris — that of the Royal Hospital des Enfants Rouges, and that of Saint Nicholas des Champs — asked to have the honour of giving her a last resting-place. The Cardinal of Noailles, being appealed to, decided the matter in favor of Saint Nicholas des Champs, her parish.

So far as her calm and uneventful life would allow us to do so, we have shown what Mademoiselle de Scudéry was as a woman. What she was as a writer, the nature of her works, their aim and influence, will be seen in the following pages.

CHAPTER III.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry's Works: "Ibrahim."

MADemoiselle DE GOURNAY's "Promenoir de Montaigne" had neither universal interest nor success. The Princess of Conté's "Amours du Grand Alcandre" pleased, chiefly, because it gave the scandal of a court, and dealt with the love intrigues of a popular Prince. But Mademoiselle de Scudéry's were real romances — they had a large and genuine public — they pleased and interested thousands. They eclipsed those of La Calprenède, and Gomberville, and rivalled the fame of d'Urfé's "Astrée." Human nature has not changed since they were written; by what melancholy magic have they lost all power to amuse the least exacting class of all readers?

We might as well ask, why are novels perishable? The very charm which they possess for cotemporaries, of expressing the feelings and painting the manners of the day, takes from their interest with another generation. Their truth is minute, cotemporary truth — it is seldom the broad, tragic, or comic truth of all time. Their men and women do not act and talk as men and women always would, but after the fashion of a day, sometimes of a circle. Thus the tone is caught, and with it a sort of reality, which posterity cannot feel, or, feeling it, cannot be entertained with. It is, in short, the great disadvantage of every work of fiction, that its first quality on its appearance, interest, is also the first to forsake it. We read and judge coldly that which we were meant to read with eagerness and passion.

These remarks apply chiefly to the first element in *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* novels — the story; for besides this there are two others — the episodes and the conversation.

In the story we find an illustrious hero and an admirable heroine. The hero loves with profound respect, with immaculate fidelity, and restless ardour. The heroine is cool as snow, and as pure. Passing jealousy alone proves that she returns her lover's passion; but she does return it, though with the most rigid decorum which human love admits. Fathers, enemies, and friends cross or favour this exalted love, which, after battles, shipwrecks, escapes, and conflagrations beyond number, is crowned with happiness in the last page of the tenth volume.

In substance this story is not so very unlike one of our own day; it is still "the course of true love never did run smooth." Yet we cannot like it, because we cannot believe it, is the general objection. A weak and specious reason. Every day there appear amongst us successful stories as improbable, full of incident as startling, of characters far more unnatural, and stories, too, almost as long as "*Cyrus*" or "*Clélie*," which are eagerly read by thousands, and in which all believe enough to find amusement.

But these tales certainly have not the fatal blemish which has made *Mademoiselle de Scudéry* unreadable; they are not magnanimous. A convict would stand a better chance with us as the hero of a novel than the great *Cyrus*; a *Marion Delorme* would make a better heroine than a *Clelia*. No doubt we love, praise and admire goodness. We give many

virtues to our characters; we like our books to have a moral tone — sometimes a religious one; but if we have not lost in real life, it is to be hoped, that noble elevation of the human soul for which magnanimity is the only equivalent word, we certainly do not seem to prize it in books. Now, this heroic greatness was one of the attractions not merely of *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* novels, but of all the novels of that school which she followed and did not found. *Tallemant des Réaux*, that cynical collector of scandal, praised her in this respect, little as he liked her in others.

Madame de Sévigné's delicate taste was not proof against the noble feelings which her *La Calprenède* expressed in a style she justly laughed at. In short, if our ancestors were not better men and women than we are, they liked heroism, greatness, and refinement of feeling in novels better than we do. Many objections can be made to *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* stories, any one of which is sufficient to show why she is no longer read; but we think that the first, the greatest, and the most fatal, that which lies at the root of all, is, that her tone is too noble and too lofty.

If we want to know how altered in form, at least, is our standard of every excellence from that which she received and strengthened, we need only compare her delineations of love, courage, and heroism with those which now pass current; her heroes and heroines, with the ladies and gentlemen who still move in the world of fiction. We will venture to assert that *Cyrus*, who, after winning a battle, exclaims, "I find glory which I wish not for, and I find not *Mandane* whom I seek" — that *Clelia*, in whose chaste ears the very word of love must not be breathed — are not more unnatural, though want of habit makes us find them ridiculous, than the man who indulges in every vice, yet keeps unstained in his heart the purest passion woman ever inspired — than the woman who, with all the attributes of a sinless angel, is subject to the most human and womanlike weakness of love. In both there is a sad want of truth, but *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* heroes are at least more gallant and more faithful, and her heroines more dignified, than *Mr. Such-a-one*, or *Miss So-and-so*. Her characters are, like their own passions, complete: love is all love; virtue knows not a stain; the hero is immaculate, and the heroine is peerless; their sentiments are lofty, their language is refined, and whatever their fate may

be, whatever they do or suffer, a certain sublime greatness, the reflex of their own exalted nature, surrounds them. They are not real, for who ever saw such passions and such beings in daily life; they are not even ideal, for truth is the foundation of all ideal portraiture; but they are assuredly noble illusions of the human mind, pure dreams of the great hearts of yore. Let us regret, and not rejoice, that genius must now throw in a few vices, a few sad weaknesses, to render credible or interesting the long and devoted love, the lofty purity, which our ancestors accepted entire, and with perfect faith. Alas! are we better because we have ceased to admit the heroism, the greatness, the lofty passions which charmed them?

Next to the story, which rarely fills more than one-third of the whole work, come the episodes. These are not always complete tales; like real life, they often have no end — and like it, too, they often deal with men and women who do not love for ever, who are selfish, capricious, and ridiculous; they come in to unfold some event of the main story, to illustrate some feature of the human mind or heart, or even to show forth some peculiarity of temper. Magnanimity and heroism they generally leave to Cyrus, Mandane, and Clelia. These episodes we may consider as the genuine offspring of *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* mind; here, in the knowledge of every-day life, in the analysis of characters, feelings, and manners, she was at home. Her lofty histories she wrote to please the age; but, alas! she did not believe in them much more than we do.

Intermingled with the romance and the episodes are the conversations, by far the best element in *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* works. Ingenious, subtle, full of delicate perception and excellent matter, they delighted the most refined minds in her own times, and have much that must always please persons of taste. Both episodes and conversations prove her to have been an ingenious tale writer and an agreeable moralist. She mistook her vocation in attempting prose epics, and the mistake has proved fatal; for having too willingly yielded to the taste of her own age, she has been handed down to posterity as the representative of its worst phasis. This compliance, however, gave her immense power in her day. Her romances were literally considered as a code of morals, taste, and good breeding, and there is no doubt

that she intended them to be such. Like Madame de Genlis, like Madame de Staël, and our own Miss Edgeworth, she aimed at being a teacher; and one she was, whose voice was long heard and obeyed. Her works have a double aspect, the literary and the moral; and both aspects having the misfortune to rouse the wrath of her two great antagonists, Boileau and Molière, contributed to her final ruin.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry wrote for well nigh thirty years; for twenty years most assiduously. She produced upwards of fifty volumes, numbering from five to fifteen hundred pages each. These romances, the harangues of illustrious women, ten volumes of conversations and a few tales, and some playful poems — with imagination they do not profess to deal — form the staple of her works. With her romances alone we have any concern. An acute and competent critic attributes to her brother and his wife the eight volumes of "Almahide;" the three novels that are hers beyond doubt, "Ibrahim," "the Great Cyrus," and "Clelia," are, at all events, sufficient to give us a fair idea of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's best and worst manner.

"Ibrahim, or the Illustrious Bassa," published in 1641, is the shortest and the most readable of the three great Scudéry romances. It pleased Boileau to assert that, taking d'Urfé's "Astrée" for her model, Mademoiselle de Scudéry gave to kings and heroes the feelings he had with more propriety attributed to shepherds. The propriety is a doubtful matter, now that the pastoral has run its course, and that shepherds have not been found softer-hearted than statesmen or sovereigns; but setting aside that strange objection, "Ibrahim," for one, was assuredly not built on d'Urfé's model. It was the child of Italian and Spanish literature; it was an imitation, not a servile one, but an imitation like most first attempts. The tone is French; but the cast of the story is essentially southern. That story takes up little room, and is soon told. The two rival families of Justiniani and Grimaldi are in Genoa what the Capulets and the Montagues were in Verona, and the same fate that made Romeo love Juliet, makes the young Justiniani adore the beautiful Isabella Grimaldi. The lover is found beneath his mistress's window by her incensed father, who sets on him sword in hand. Another faction coming up, compels Grimaldi to think of his own safety. The young man sides with his late

foe, saves his life, and is wounded in his defence. Hatred is conquered by so much generosity; Grimaldi promises Justiniani the hand of his daughter, who is not merely a beauty, but is also a Princess of Monaco, and the two long estranged families are formally reconciled. Unfortunately, Justiniani had killed the son of a powerful senator in this midnight affray; his offence is proved; sentence of banishment is recorded against him; he goes into exile; Isabella's father dies soon afterwards, and with him dies the hope of ever calling her his. Her mother is ambitious, and favours another suitor, and a report even reaches the banished man that his faithless mistress is married.

In his despair Justiniani undertakes perilous journeys, and goes on dangerous adventures, which end in his being taken by a Turkish vessel, and in his becoming the slave, the favourite, and the generalissimo of Soliman the Second. Eight years pass away, but his heart is still with Isabella, even as, spite the turban and the name of Ibrahim Bassa, his faith is still that of Christ. A former friend and fellow-countryman, whom he discovers under the garb of a slave in Constantinople, reveals to him that Isabella, now an orphan, is still free and constant. With hope the power of endurance ceases, and Ibrahim falls into the deepest melancholy. Touched with his grief, Soliman sends him on an embassy to Genoa, but first makes him solemnly promise to return at the end of six months.

And now occurs, though often interrupted by needless episodes, the best part of the tale. The lovers meet, and find that eight years have but strengthened their mutual passion. Trials, sorrows, have passed over them in vain. Time itself, the great destroyer, has not prevailed over their deep-set affection. And yet they cannot be happy; for love, duty, and honour struggle in Justiniani's heart. On learning his fatal promise, Isabella, whose love is much more open and free than that of the divine Mandane or the admirable Clélie, insists on following her lover's fortune. She cannot part from him again; and she cannot go with him unless she is his wife. But the generosity of affection which makes her willing to leave home and liberty, in order to share his splendid slavery in Constantinople, forbids him to accept a sacrifice so dangerous. Shall he, a slave, bear away the woman who is so dear to him; make her, like himself, subject to a kind despot's will; and,

perhaps, even expose her to his perilous admiration? It cannot be. Parts are reversed: it is the mistress who entreats to be wedded; it is the lover who refuses to marry the woman he adores. Her prayers never go beyond womanlike modesty, and his rejection never for a moment excludes the fondest affection. It is a noble contest between the two strongest feelings which can divide a human heart — love and honor. The third alternative — that of violating his promise, of staying, a free but dishonored man — no more occurs to Justiniani than it is contemplated by the high-souled Isabella. At length he remains victor in this sad and heroic struggle; but a flight without adieu secures his melancholy victory.

Ibrahim is sadder than ever when he appears once more before his imperial master. To taste again of liberty and love, and lose them, is worse than to have lost them once for all. Soliman is troubled at the melancholy of his favourite; his Sultana, Roxelana, suggests a remedy — that the Princess of Monaco shall be forcibly carried away and brought to Ibrahim. The advice is relished, and promptly acted upon; but what Ibrahim had feared comes to pass — no sooner does Soliman behold the beautiful Isabella than he conceives a violent passion for her; and, unused to self-denial, he urges his love in Turkish style — whilst Ibrahim is far away fighting battles and winning victories for his ungrateful master.

He returns in time to deliver Isabella, and fly with her; but they are promptly overtaken, captured, and brought back. Isabella's life is spared, but Ibrahim is sentenced to death. History tells us that this able renegade was strangled, through the intrigues of the powerful Roxelana; but *Mademoiselle de Scudéry* merely inflicts a fictitious death upon him. The Sultan conquers his unworthy love, and returning to his ancient magnanimity, he dismisses Ibrahim and Isabella in peace. Laden with the gifts of Soliman, the lovers return to their native land, and a happy marriage closes the history of their long sorrows. That such was the real story of Ibrahim Bassa, the author avers is beyond a doubt, and quotes the unimpeachable authority of a Greek caloyer, who knew and told *M. de Scudéry* all about it.

"Ibrahim" has fewer faults than *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* subsequent works. It is shorter, more amusing, and less improbable than her two great romances. To its Italian models it owed a clearness, a brevity, and a distinctness she lost

later. She was also more successful in delineating Turkish princes and Christian cavaliers than when she attempted Assyrian conquerors or Greek philosophers. "Ibrahim" bears abundantly the stamp of its age, but can still afford amusement — the ignorant, the young, would read it with pleasure; whereas the "Grand Cyrus" and the "Clélie," precisely because they are of a higher cast, and appeal to feelings and tastes that have passed away, have now nothing left save for the intellectual and the educated. They have merits of their own, however; and "Ibrahim" has but few that have not been suggested by Italian literature: its qualities are negative. It lived longer than its successors; not because it was a better book, but because its defects were less obvious.

The episodes in "Ibrahim" are of the same cast with the story itself — romantic; but in some we already trace the peculiar vein of Mademoiselle de Scudéry — the gently satirical; that which answers best to the French word *esprit* — a word more genial and less poignant than wit; an embodiment of delicate perception and graceful analysis, which, though confined to no nation, has always been most excellent in French writers.

The story of the French Marquis is as light and delicate a bit of raillery as the agreeable and inconstant Frenchman of the old school ever received at the hands of a countrywoman. "M. de Marsé," says the narrator of the Marquis's adventures, "had four sisters, and the Marquis had only one. They were neighbours in the country, and visited each other frequently, as is the French custom. Marsé fell in love with the Marquis's one sister; and the Marquis, who always returns love with interest, became enamoured of M. de Marsé's four. He liked the eyes of one, the figure of the other, the voice of the third, and the wit of the last; and these four girls, he declared, made a most accomplished mistress."

M. de Marsé was satisfied with one woman: that one he wanted to marry; and he thought it would facilitate his suit if he knew which of his four sisters the Marquis preferred. A mutual friend was accordingly requested to sound him on this delicate matter. The Marquis answered that he liked them all equally well; that the eldest was plump and fair; that she had sweet eyes and a sweet temper; but it was a pity she was not a little taller. The second he praised in the same agreeable style. She was tall, had a good carriage, fair hair, and a

noble pride, which would render her incomparable if she had a better complexion, and talked a little more. But then how charming was the third, with her beautiful teeth and her lively temper, and that fine impassioned voice, which must certainly subdue all hearts, were it not for a certain unevenness of temper she could not conceal. "As to the youngest," pursued the Marquis, "it must be acknowledged that the clear vermilion complexion which she owes to youth, and which may be called the soul of beauty; that her bright eyes, black hair, lovely neck, exact figure, and beautiful hands, and, what is still more marvellous at fifteen, that apt wit which makes her the delight of company, teaches her to talk pleasantly on every subject, and gives a particular charm to her whole person: it must, I say, be confessed that all these things would almost deserve a polite man's whole heart, if she did not live in a province, and if she had only breathed six months the air of the great world; but the mere thought that she is a country girl, is a sure preservative for a man from court."

The perplexed messenger returns to Marsé, who hopes and tries to get the truth from his sisters by questioning them separately. But one thing only he learns from them — that they are all willing to marry the Marquis; that each thinks he loves her; and that none can give any proof of that affection.

"And so," indignantly exclaims Marsé, on being left alone, "the Marquis has secured the affections of my four sisters, whilst from his I get nothing but cold civility!"

Even that the Marquis's sister is inclined to deny him; for she loves another, and she begs her brother to discountenance M. de Marsé's visits.

The Marquis feelingly remonstrates.

"What!" he exclaimed, "you see me here, a hundred leagues away from court, in a solitary country, where one can scarcely see anything like a woman, and you would be so cruel as to deprive me of four charming girls! Pray, if it be true that the loss of one mistress gives such torments as steel and poison alone can put an end to, what is to become of me when I am robbed at one blow of four whom I passionately love, and in a place, too, where I cannot possibly repair the loss! If I were in Paris, I should have that complaisance for you, not merely for four, but for thirty, well knowing how soon I could find others! But to wish to deprive me, in a desert, of the only

four girls I can love, is to be so inhuman, that were you to think seriously about it, you would certainly repent it!"

"But," laughingly answered his sister, "you do not love them; for how could you be thus divided?"

"Not love them?" answered the Marquis; "you know me very little if you think so. It is certain that I love them with my whole soul, and that I have never been so much in love, nor yet so constant."

His sister does not understand this extraordinary constancy; but he persists in his assertions.

"I never feel more joy," he declares, "than when I see them all four together. I admire the fairness of the first, the bearing of the second, the voice of the third, the pretty ways of the youngest. So pleased am I with this way of loving, that if, by an unheard-of miracle, I could take all that pleases me from each of these four girls, and make one masterpiece of them, I would rather not; for if I loved but one I should have no comfort when she was angry, whilst, as it is, I am never quite unhappy: if I have vexed the fair one a little, the dark one looks favourably at me; if I am out of favour with the grave one, the gay one consoles me by her good humour. And when I am in the good graces of the whole four, I have joys inexpressible. One prepares a bracelet for me, another loops up my hat, another gives me powder and perfumes, whilst the last has her portrait taken for my sake. Then I repeat a song which suits the whole four, and which every one takes for herself; and what is better than all this is that this beautiful and extraordinary passion can never end unhappily; for even if I should attempt my own undoing, I cannot reach that calamitous end which closes almost every love — I mean marriage."

On that melancholy conclusion, his sister, however, is bent for herself; and the Marquis has but little time left to sun himself in the good graces of his four fair ladies. His last interview with them is characteristic. He calls upon them during the absence of their brother, and finds them all in full dress, and very merry, very gracious, for each looks upon him as her future husband. The eldest is attired in green silver cloth, and her sleeves and hair are adorned with crimson ribbons, very becoming to her fair complexion; her second sister is in white and silver, which enhances her modest look; the third wears a lavender satin gown, sparkling with silver spangles; the youngest is attired in a flowered silver gauze robe, lined

with crimson, and white and crimson feathers in her dark hair heighten her naturally lively appearance. The Marquis is enchanted and emboldened by their evident kindness; he makes love to the whole four at once, with this unfortunate result, however, that they are so kind as to weary him. He finds that even four mistresses can be too sweet, and consents without reluctance to his sister's marriage. It is agreed on and openly declared, to Marsé's grief and consternation; and foreseeing that a very unpleasant explanation might follow, the Marquis forestalls it by expressing the following original sentiments on love and marriage: —

"Such is my humour, that the greatest proof of affection I can give a girl, when I fall in love with her, is not to marry her. There have even been some to whom, that they might receive my affection more favourably, and to show them how much respect I felt for them, I declared that, in becoming their lover, I did not intend to be their master; and that, by professing myself their slave, I ensured them against ever being their tyrant."

"Perhaps you did not always speak so openly," answered Marsé.

"No," said the Marquis, "not when I thought the ladies I loved had enough penetration not to suspect me of so evil a design; but at least I did and said nothing to make them think I intended more than loving them, being agreeably received and listened to, and receiving in my turn all those little favours which are not the property of husbands, and should always remain within the gift of ladies, for the benefit of their lovers. Husbands do not wear bracelets made from the hair of their wives, they are not enchanted to kiss the tips of their fingers, to pay them compliments, praise their beauty, give them serenades, write verses in their honour, and tell them that they burn and die of love for them; is it not therefore strange and unreasonable to deprive ladies and their lovers of those innocent pleasures?"

Marsé, by no means pleased to lose his mistress, and hear the Marquis talk in this agreeable style, rides home and tells his four sisters (not separately this time) all that has passed. Amazed to learn that they were rivals, the four girls look at each other as if inclined to quarrel; but the third, who has a merry turn, exclaims, with heart-felt admiration,

"It must be confessed that the Marquis is a wonderful man,

to have deceived four women at once! I thought much of him, indeed, but I did not imagine him to be so worthy of my admiration!"

And such is her enthusiasm for this accomplished deceiver, that the fair lady loses no time in asking for his friendship, and in offering him hers; and true friendship it shall be — not love in disguise, which both hold unworthy of their frankness and abilities; an alliance, offensive and defensive, to which both shall be true, in their war on the sexes.

And here ends this pretty bit of trifling, so characteristic of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's age and country, and to which only a woman's pen could do justice. We have no doubt that she knew this agreeable Marquis well—we should not wonder if she had not heard his edifying doctrines uttered by his own lips; he must have been too much in earnest to shrink from the avowal of so consistent a code of polite love. It is so French, too! An English male flirt is only happy so far as he can make a girl miserable. Miss Austen's "Crawford" says so. "She must pine and feel as if she should never be happy again." Not so the good-natured French Marquis. He only wants to be happy himself, and to be appreciated. He really loves his four mistresses; he is a Platonic Sultan, and exults in the sight of their charms; let them get husbands if they can, poor things! If they are indeed so infatuated as to wish to marry, he will not interfere, though he certainly likes them too well to help them to their own ruin!

CHAPTER IV.

"The Grand Cyrus."

IN "Artamène, or the Grand Cyrus," Mademoiselle de Scudéry attempted a totally different style of composition from that which she had followed in "Ibrahim." She chose a remote age, historical characters of classical fame, and some known events. Out of these she fashioned a romance, on which she grafted the feelings, manners, and language of her own times; she interspersed it with episodes and digressions without end; took four years to complete it — the first volume appeared in 1649, and the last in 1653 — and could not tell the history of the Asiatic conqueror under ten octavo volumes, comprising nearly thirteen thousand closely-printed pages.

The length alone of "The Grand Cyrus" would prove fatal to it with posterity, but this was no objection when it was written. Madame de Genlis justly remarks that ten volumes to read were not so much in times when ladies undertook, as a matter of course, to work the furniture of a whole château. Leisure had not then the thousand calls it must acknowledge now; novel writers were few, newspapers were in their dawn — what was it to read thirteen thousand pages, extending over a period of four years? We have no doubt that when she requested her uncle to send her "the second volume of the 'Great Cyrus,' as she had only read as far as the imprisonment of Philidaspes, upon the seven hundredth and thirty-third page," Edith of Bellenden was nowise frightened at her undertaking. Had she not more than sufficient leisure for the "Great Cyrus" in the stately chambers of Tillietudlem? And had there not been episodes — three, if not four — before she reached that seven hundredth and thirty-third page? Had not the history of Aglatidas and Amestris, the history of the divine Mandane, the history of Philoxipes and Polycrites broken pleasantly on the conquests and victories of the illustrious hero? And were there not plenty more of such histories in store before the tenth and last volume was reached? — twenty-eight in all; the average length of each being from one to four hundred pages, and the whole occupying considerably more than half of the entire work.

These episodes are much more entertaining than the main story. They shew us Mademoiselle de Scudéry's genuine talent as a tale-writer: but the romance, on which they are a running and often contradictory commentary, possesses another and superior interest, since it is such as the public taste then required, and shews us after what fashion should be constructed a tale which fine ladies would admire and fine gentlemen take the trouble to read, under Louis the Fourteenth's reign.

The "Great Cyrus" opens in true epic style, with a striking catastrophe: the conflagration of the town of Sinope. The description is tedious, but not without power: —

"The sky, the sea, the plain, the summits of the farthest mountains, were so lit that, spite the darkness of the night, every object was distinctly to be seen. Never was there anything so terrible. Twenty galleys burned at once in the port; from the very midst of the water they sent their waving

flames up to the sky. Agitated by an impetuous wind, those flames often bent towards the largest part of the city, which they had already consumed and turned into a vast pyre. In a moment they passed from one spot to another, so that there was no part of this ill-fated town but felt their fury. The sails and rigging of the galleys and vessels rose frightfully in the air as fast as they burned, and fell down again in sparks on the neighbouring houses. Some of these, being already consumed, yielded to the violence of that pitiless victor, and fell in a moment in the streets and squares they had recently adorned. That frightful multitude of flames, which rose from so many different places, and had more or less strength according to the matter that fed them, seemed agitated by the wind that mixed or separated them, to strive for the glory of destroying this noble city. Amidst their brightness appeared vast clouds of smoke, which, by their sombre colours, added something more terrible to a sight so awful; and frightful, indeed, were the innumerable sparks falling round the city like hail-fire. Midst all those flames could still be seen a few temples and houses that stood out longer than the rest, and allowed enough of the beauty of their structure to be perceived to inspire sorrow and compassion for their inevitable fate. This terrible element destroyed all things, or shewed what it had not destroyed so near its ruin, that it was difficult not to be seized with horror and pity by a sight so extraordinary and so fatal. By this frightful object the enamoured Artamène — after leaving a winding valley shaded by woods, at the head of four thousand men — was strangely surprised. He stopped, amazed, and not knowing if what he saw was real; unable even to express his amazement in words, he looked at the city, at the port — he cast his gaze on the sea, all inflamed from the reflection of the sky — he looked at the plains and the mountains, and raised his eyes to heaven; and without being able to move or speak, he seemed to ask of all things if what he saw was true or an illusion."

The Artamène to whom we are thus introduced is Cyrus, and we have to go back through some volumes to his early history, to the progress of his love for Mandane, and to her abduction, until we come once more to the burning walls of Sinope.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry added little of her own invention

to the traditions of history. She was satisfied with giving them a modern colouring.

Astyages, last king of Media, having been warned in a dream that his daughter, Mandane, would bring forth a son, through whom his son, Cyaxares, would lose his crown, caused the child that was born of her marriage with Cambyzes, king of Persia, to be exposed on a barren mountain, in order that he might be devoured by wild beasts. The young Cyrus escaped this fate; he was taken and reared by a shepherd's wife, with whom he remained, until his haughty temper betrayed his royal origin. As he was playing with several children of his own age, he assumed the style and authority of their monarch, and ordered one of them to be whipped for disobedience. The father of the child, a nobleman, complained of this stretch of authority; the matter was brought before Astyages, Cyrus was recognised by his grandfather, and ultimately given up to his parents. But the restless youth had no sooner reached his sixteenth year, than, fired with ambition and the love of adventure, he stole from the court of Cambyzes, assumed the name of Artamène, and set off, accompanied by the wise Chrysante and the bold Féraulas. To the infinite grief of the King and Queen of Persia, the rumour of his death in a shipwreck soon spread, and when Artamène reached the capital of Cappadocia, over which his uncle, Cyaxares, reigned, he had the satisfaction of witnessing a thanksgiving sacrifice offered by the King to the gods, for the death of that Cyrus whose existence was considered so fatal to his mother's family. Present at the sacrifice was the King's daughter and heiress, the Princess Mandane. She was as beautiful as a princess was then bound to be at the blooming age of sixteen: and we are to recognise the lovely Madame de Longueville, the heroine of the Fronde, in the following description:—

“She was that day magnificently dressed, and elegant without affectation. The veil of silver gauze she wore did not conceal the beautiful golden locks of her fair hair, the loveliest in hue that ever was seen, for it had all that can give light, and not take from vivacity, which is one of the conditions of perfect beauty. This Princess was also of a most noble figure, and very elegant; with such modest majesty did she walk, that she drew after her the hearts of all beholders. Her neck was fair and exquisitely shaped; her eyes were blue, but soft, brilliant, and so full of loveliness and modesty that it was

impossible to see them without admiration and respect: her mouth was red, her teeth were white, even, and regular, and her complexion was so bright, so smooth, and so lovely, that the freshness and the beauty of the rarest flowers of spring can give but an imperfect idea of the Princess. She also had the most beautiful hands and finest arms that could be seen, for, as she twice raised her veil on entering the temple, I noticed this last beauty Whether she walked, stood still, spoke, or was silent, smiled or was in a reverie, Mandane was always lovely and admirable."

With this fair being, Artamène immediately falls in love. Forgetting all his dreams of ambition and adventure, or rather bending them to his passion, he becomes Cyaxares's most devoted soldier. He saves the monarch's life, rises to distinction, becomes a great general, and has the happiness of seeing and adoring the divine Mandane. More is out of the question. Reserved, timid, and full of worship as is his silent love, it offends the delicacy of the Princess. She merely suspects that Artamène is her slave, and that suspicion is enough to alarm her. Her friend and confidant, Martesia, pleads his heroic qualities, his services to her father, his magnanimity and greatness, shown in a thousand occurrences, and pleads in vain. Mandane's wrath, indeed, is gentle, but it is pertinacious.

"But, Madame," Martesia cannot help saying, "what does the illustrious Artamène fail in?"

"A crown," answered the Princess, blushing.

This objection is partly removed. A great battle is at hand, Artamène cannot bear to engage in it, perhaps to fall, without letting Mandane know that he has loved her. Accordingly, he writes a letter, revealing his love and his rank, though not his name, and requests it to be delivered to her in the event of his death. He is severely wounded in the battle, and though his body cannot be found, Féraulas, concluding him to be dead, gives the letter to the Princess.

The grief she feels, on reading this letter, reveals to the proud Mandane that, even without knowing Artamène to be a prince, she loved him a little — a very little, we will venture to add, from the way in which she reasons about her grief. Indeed, the fashion after which she brings back everything to herself, as to the centre of all worship, is thoroughly royal;

and, whether she intended it or not in Mandane, Mademoiselle de Scudéry drew a princess with great truth and fidelity.

We need not say that Artamène is not dead. He soon reappears at court, and finds Mandane more coy than ever. The love passages between them are amongst the most peculiar in the book. Artamène learns that the King of Assyria, who is at the court of Cyaxares, under the assumed name of Philidaspes, means to carry off Mandane, whom the laws of her country forbid to marry a foreigner. This plan Artamène discloses to Mandane, and the Princess avails herself of the opportunity, in order to give him a few broad hints.

"That a lover should reveal his passion by attempting to carry off his mistress, is not merely an unheard of thing," exclaims the indignant Princess, "but it is also beyond my patience," she added, with much emotion; "for I could not tolerate a declaration of love from the greatest prince on earth, after *ten years* of service, respect, and submission!"

Ten years would, we fear, make so great a change in the beauty of the divine Mandane, that before the lapse of that period the prince might perhaps grow inconstant, and carry service, respect, and submission elsewhere. However, Artamène, though daunted for a while, is not utterly disheartened, and declares his love on the first opportunity. It is a favourable one; he meets the princess in the royal gardens, and remains with her by the king's commands. She sits on a grassy bank, her maids are talking together a few yards off, and Artamène standing before her respectfully solicits a hearing, which she cannot well refuse, though he no sooner speaks than she turns rigorous. He reminds her that, even after he had acknowledged his love to her in a letter, his supposed death drew tears from her, and he throws himself on her mercy. That grief she cannot deny, but with some confusion declares it was because he had concealed his affection that she felt tenderness and pity, and that, if he will remain silent, she will remain in the same merciful temper. "But why, madam," exclaims Cyrus, "why will you not be as merciful to an unhappy prince as you were to a dead one." Mandane replied: "The dead prince had expiated his fault, and the living prince renews it. Artamène," she added, with a very grave countenance, "I confess to you that I esteem you, that I am indebted to you, that your supposed death gave me a real grief; but I also declare to you that I love

honour more than I prize Artamène, though I prize him much, and that even if I had all the tenderness imaginable for you, I would oppose and conquer it rather than let you tell me of a passion I must mistrust."

"Ha, madam!" exclaimed Artamène, "how little you know the love you have inspired in my heart! Know, madam, that the purity of my passion equals the purity of your soul. Ay, divine princess, I love you so respectfully that I would disown my own heart if it had suffered an unjust desire . . . and, indeed, madam, if my birth had rendered me unworthy of bearing your chains, I would have broken mine by death; I never would have allowed that the illustrious Mandane should have a slave unworthy of her rank. Would to the gods that Artamène deserved that glorious quality by his own virtue, as well as by his birth! Yet, divine Mandane, it is for love of you that Artamène is only Artamène; and that, far from passing for the son of a great king, he is merely considered as one whom fortune has favoured; but, madam, he has not ceased to be himself, and his soul is still lofty and incapable of an unjust feeling. Do not, I entreat you, think that I knew you so badly as to suspect you of a weakness. No, madam, I did not think the Princess Mandane could feel a violent passion; but I did hope she would tolerate mine, since it is not opposed to virtue. For, madam, all I ask is to be allowed to love you, and to say so."

"You ask too much by half," said the princess, blushing; "and I should be unworthy the innocent passion you feel for me, if I allowed you to say more than once, what none but you could have said without becoming hateful."

Artamène, though forbidden to speak, is therefore not forbidden to love. Severe though Mandane may seem, she is in reality very indulgent; for not to hate a lover, is pretty much akin to loving him, with princesses so coy and so dignified. And Artamène, submissive and full of worship though his tone may be, is not so cool a lover as to be easily repulsed. No doubt he would have ended his days had he not been a prince — for how could a man of meaner birth aspire to Mandane, or wish her to stoop to him? — but since the gods have made him a king's son, not all his lady's coldness shall cause him to relinquish the hope of her favour. Mandane is obliged to come to terms with the pertinacious lover; she agrees not to banish him from her presence, but exacts that he shall

reveal his name, which he still conceals. Artamène asks for a three months' delay, and the princess reluctantly consents to suspend her sentence. Before the three months are out, Cyrus is sent by Cyaxares to ask Thomyris, Queen of the Massagetæ, in marriage. The warlike queen falls in love with the ambassador; he is obliged to leave her court privately, and, on reaching Cappadocia, he learns that Mandane has been carried off by his hated rival, the King of Assyria.

And now comes the vital change which Mademoiselle de Scudéry introduced in the history of Cyrus. That mighty conqueror, the terror of the East, announced by the prophets, mentioned in holy writ, overruns Asia, not through lust of conquest and recklessness of human life, but to recover Mandane. Prodigious is the amount of battles, encounters, and sieges through which we are led in pursuit of the princess. When Cyrus reaches Sinope, he finds that city in flames. At the head of his army he enters the burning town, fights his way to the tower in which the King of Assyria still holds out; and having got possession, learns from his royal captive that Mandane, whose beauty is as fatal to beholders as that of Helen was in the days of Troy, has been carried off by Prince Mazare, whose galley is now tossing before them on the stormy Euxine sea. Mazare having set fire to all the ships in the port before sailing, the victorious Cyrus is as helpless to follow and deliver Mandane as his vanquished enemy. Fatal tidings come with the next morning: Mazare is found dying on the sea-shore by Cyrus, to whom he relates the wreck of his galley and the death of Mandane, whom he saw sinking in the stormy waves.

Sorrows never come singly. Cyaxares, irritated at the escape of the king of Assyria, rendered suspicious by an intercepted letter from Artamène to him, in which allusions — which his general will not explain — are made to his love, has him cast into prison.

This allusion to the captivity of the Grand Condé, the original of Cyrus, as his beautiful sister was of Mandane, must have been felt all the more, that of all Mademoiselle de Scudéry's heroes, this one, drawn in many respects from nature, had most of reality and vigour.

Pretty much in this tone might the victor of Rocroi, of Fribourg and Nordlingen, have addressed Anne of Austria or Mazarin when he was sent to the dungeons of Vincennes.

Cyaxares reminds his general, rather sharply, that there is some difference of birth between him and his royal rival, and haughtily the disguised Cyrus replies:

"When my sword is in my hand, I can keep my ground against kings, as well as against other men. You know that more than one can tell whether I speak truly. The very king whose defence you seem to take, can say something about it, if his memory fail him not."

"Your bravery is not questioned," replied Cyaxares. "I do not doubt it; but I doubt your fidelity."

"Your majesty would not doubt it if you knew me well," said Artamène. "It is not easy to imagine that any man could corrupt the fidelity of one who has crowns at his command."

Little pleased to be thus reminded of services he thinks to have amply rewarded, Cyaxares threatens that captivity shall conquer Artamène's obstinacy, and make him confess his guilt.

"My liege," answered Artamène, without anger or emotion, "neither captivity nor torments can make Artamène disclose what he is resolved to conceal. And what consoles me in this matter is, that if I exchange my sword for chains, it is at a time when your majesty has only powerless enemies, and in losing me, loses but a useless servant."

"I understand," angrily said the king — "you cannot help reproaching me with your services." Then turning to the door of his apartment, in which he was alone with Artamène, he called the captain of his guards, and commanded him to take him to his room, and answer for him with his life. This captain, who loved Artamène tenderly, and knew how high his favour had been, remained amazed at this command; but Artamène, noticing it, "Come," said he, handing him his sword, "let us render the king even this last service; let all his subjects learn to obey with a good grace the most painful commands."

"So saying, he made a deep obeisance to Cyaxares, and followed Andramias with as little emotion as if he were returning to his room free as he left it."

There is certainly spirit, vigour, and dignity in this little scene; and, without wishing to take away from Mademoiselle de Scudéry's merit, we think that its tone of courtly chivalry

betrays the hand of her brother, himself a soldier, and a man of high spirit and great bravery.

Cyrus bears his imprisonment with heroic constancy. To his great joy, he learns that Mandane is living; that she has been saved by one of her rejected lovers, the King of Pontus; and that, though a captive, she is treated with respect, and has not ceased to remember him. Cyaxares, softened by this news, agrees to release him; and even the knowledge that his prisoner is the once dreaded Cyrus does not alter his generous resolve, much strengthened by a sedition in favour of the captive. Cyrus, now no longer known as Artamène, is in greater favour than he has ever been with his uncle. Mandane is to be his when he can recover her; but never did lover undergo such labours to deliver a mistress as now fall to his lot. Artaxata, Babylon, Sardis, Cumæ have to be besieged and taken; battles in which kings fall like common soldiers, and where the dead are reckoned by thousands, are fought for this peerless beauty. For having sheltered her, Crœsus loses his crown and his treasures. The ring of Gyges is called in to help her flight; with its assistance, the king of Pontus removes her from Sardis two hours before the city is taken; and new perplexities occur, until Anaxaris helps to deliver her in Cumæ. The meeting between the released princess and the conquering Cyrus is as decorous, and yet as tender, as might be expected from so strict a mistress and so devoted a lover. Such as it is, it has many touches of subdued grace. "Then, in a few words, they related to each other all that had happened to them — but they related it differently; for Cyrus felt so much love in his heart, that he always feared not to say enough to paint his passion well, and Mandane felt so much tenderness for Cyrus in her soul, that she always feared lest she should say too much."

Mandane being now in the power of Cyrus, and he having an army wherewith to protect her, it does seem as if the troubles of these two lovers ought to be over; but we have three more volumes — that is to say, several thousand pages — to wade through, before we reach the end of their sorrows.

Anaxaris, the liberator of Mandane, is not what he seems. His real name and state are Argante, brother of Queen Thomyris. Being a prince — for none save royal persons take that liberty — he cannot see Mandane and not love. He loves

her ardently, but conceals his passion so well, that when, on reaching Cappadocia, Cyrus and the King of Assyria have a private encounter, it is to him that, in case of the worst, Cyrus confides his mistress. Anaxaris avails himself of his knowledge to deceive Mandane. He tells her that Cyrus has fallen, and urges her to fly the power of the victorious King of Assyria. Mandane believes him, surrenders herself to his care, and is conveyed by him to the kingdom of his sister Thomyris, by whom she is held in close but honourable captivity. Mandane is now in the hands of her rival, and jealousy is as good a keeper as love. There is no help for it; Cyrus must make war on the Massagetæ, and deliver his princess.

A great battle is given, in which Cyrus is taken prisoner and Spitridates is killed. Spitridates, a handsome and heroic prince, whose likeness to Cyrus leads to many mistakes throughout the story, was introduced by the author in order to reconcile historic truth or tradition, and her account of Cyrus. History tells us that Cyrus was killed in a battle which he lost against Thomyris; that to revenge the death of her son, the Scythian queen had the head of her vanquished enemy cut off, and that, throwing it into a vessel filled with human blood, she bade him drink that blood for which he had thirsted so long. This terrible fate is awarded in the story to Spitridates. Cyrus is an unknown prisoner in the Scythian camp.

Great is his grief; not because he has been defeated — not because his friend has undergone a tragic death — no, he is grieved to find that Mandane, whom he sees by chance, does not look very melancholy, though she believes him dead; loverlike, he sends her a letter full of reproaches, which falls into the hands of Thomyris. The revengeful queen, whose camp is assaulted by the army sent to deliver her captives, and who foresees a defeat, sends a murderer to the tent of Mandane, and orders him, after having stabbed her, to inflict the same fate on Cyrus. The man obeys. He enters the tent of the princess; fearful screams are heard, he issues forth with a blood-stained dagger, and proceeds to the tent of Cyrus, who wrests the weapon from his hand, and kills him on the spot.

In the meanwhile, the camp is taken; Thomyris flies, defeated — Mandane is found safe and well — the murderer committed a mistake, and killed the wrong person, and the two lovers are once more free.

Relaxing from her long and close severity for the first time, Mandane reveals part of her feelings to her lover, and allows him to divine what she does not disclose.

As for Cyrus, he is the same chivalrous worshipping lover he has ever been. An arch of triumph is raised to his honour; but it is Mandane whom he causes to pass beneath it, "for is she not the true cause of all his conquests?" Less could not be expected from the lover who declared in the course of his triumphs: "I find glory which I seek not, and I do not find Mandane whom I seek." But Mandane is found now, she is his by her father's will, by her own consent: and on the day that bestows her on him, Cambyses and Cyaxares, anxious to give a favourable meaning to the long-threatening omens connected with Cyrus, surrender their sovereign power into his hands.

"And it can be assured that since fortune and love have made men happy, they have made none happier than Cyrus was from the day forth, on which he ascended a throne so lofty that every other throne on earth seemed far beneath it."

Such is the story of the "Great Cyrus." In this brief analysis we have perforce omitted many features that redeem faults too glaring to require being pointed out. One of the most offensive to modern taste is the most natural: the historical characters, places, and events, are made to fit to the men and women, the localities, the incidents, and the feelings of Louis the Fourteenth's court, reign, and kingdom. If anything recommended the "Great Cyrus" to its contemporaries it was this want of classic truth, for which Mademoiselle de Scudéry substituted French reality. But, strange to say, neither the author nor her friends were aware of her deficiencies in this respect. A very curious and interesting conversation in "Clelia," which is even more defective than the "Great Cyrus," is convincing proof that Mademoiselle de Scudéry knew on what principles a good historical romance should be framed, and was unconscious of having violated the laws she laid down. Inquisitive persons will find that conversation entire at page 1127 of the eighth volume of the "Clelia"; we will give it here abridged, preserving chiefly those arguments which, though expressed by the characters of the tale, are evidently used to develop the opinions of the author. The speakers have been listening to the love history of Hesiod, the father of Greek poetry, and Plotina, a lively lady, fond of

controversy, and who wishes to draw out Anacreon, declares gaily,

"If I were to invent a story, I would make things much more perfect than they are. All the women should be beautiful, all the men as valiant as Hector. Everyone of my heroes would kill a hundred men at least in every battle. I would build palaces of precious stones, have prodigies every instant, and shipwrecks, conflagrations of cities, and a thousand other things which give rise to fine lamentations and beautiful descriptions."

All these, if we except the palaces of precious stones, are to be found in the Scudéry romances: the lovely women and valiant heroes, the strange adventures, the shipwrecks, and burnings of cities, besides the sieges and battles, abound in every volume of "Cyrus" and "Clelia." Yet there must have been a distinction in the author's mind, or she would not have given Plotina the worst of the argument. Anacreon proves to her that her romance would be a very bad one, and that the art of invention is that it should look like truth. Valeria objects that, if invention is too like truth, fiction will be commonplace and uninteresting.

"Ah! Valeria," replied Amilcar, "you touch on a delicate matter. To discard incredible or impossible events is not to have any save mean and common-place incidents. . . . The marvellous is not forbidden, it is necessary, but it must not occur too often, and then it must produce fine effects. Only the strange and impossible events are utterly condemned."

Herminius, who stands as we know for Pelisson, even as Amilcar was Mademoiselle de Scudéry's friend Sarrazin, is more explicit still. According to him, the novelist "must look at the world in general, as a painter considers it when he sets to work . . . above all, he must know the nature of the passions, and how they can work in the hearts of those to whom they are attributed."

"Why cannot one invent everything," asks Plotina, "and imagine even countries that do not exist? It would be much trouble spared."

"And much pleasure lost," replied Anacreon. "Take only unknown places and characters, and curiosity is less moved, and imagination, finding everything new, is inclined to doubt all. If, on the contrary, an age is selected, not so remote that nothing is known of it, nor yet so near that me-

mory is familiar with everyone of its events; if incidents of which the historian can have been ignorant, and which he was bound to neglect, can be supposed to have happened in that age, the opportunity of producing fine effects is much greater than if everything were invented. When a writer takes celebrated names, great and well-known events and countries everyone has heard of, the mind is willing to be deceived, and to receive invention with truth. They must indeed be adroitly mingled — the author must take the trouble of studying closely the age he has chosen, know how to avail himself of all there is remarkable in it, and how to paint its customs . . . though one may judiciously fashion those customs to the manners of one's own times, in order to please more."

If novels were written according to theory, in what would Mademoiselle de Scudéry's historical romances fail? Her laws are excellent. Probable incidents, truth to nature, an age neither too remote nor yet too near, great names and well-known events, blended with fictitious incidents and characters; ancient manners observed with a judicious compliance to the feelings of the writer's own age — all these are surely wise precepts, which might have produced, and no doubt did produce, good historical romances in Mademoiselle de Scudéry's estimation. Posterity will probably laugh at nineteenth century views of feudal times, but though we cannot see our own errors, we can be clear-sighted enough to those of which Mademoiselle de Scudéry was so unconscious. She preserved historical names, events and geography; but in her volumes, as well as in the prints that adorn them, Cyrus and Brutus, as the case may be, crown their Assyrian mantle or their Roman toga with the broad-brimmed, plume-shaded hat *à la Louis Quatorze*. The contrast between the feelings, manners and language in the romance and the classic names and events famous in history, is as pitiable and ludicrous as that in the costume.

It is remarkable, that one of the circumstances on which she relied for the success of her romances, their being historical, should have been one of the first causes of their decline, even in Mademoiselle de Scudéry's own times; and it is as certain that her compliance with the tone of magnanimity, romance, and adoring affection, which custom still exacted from writers of fiction, has proved as fatal to her as her unconscious perversion of history. That tone was already de-

clining when she wrote — it was but an echo of the middle-ages, of prouder days and nobler times; and she took it for the voice of the present, and was not aware herself how little was her own faith in the boundless love and chivalry of her heroes.

Indeed, life and love have two aspects in the "Grand Cyrus," as well as in all that Mademoiselle de Scudéry wrote; the conventional, which is to be found in the main story — the real, which appears in the conversations and episodes. Yet, strange to say, her two great enemies, Boileau and Molière, seem to have viewed only the first as her true meaning, and to have skipped every episode and every page that subdued and modified it. Posterity has done like them — it has laughed at the heroic achievements, the great loves and the exalted characters, and it has ignored the quiet satire, the flirtations, the foolish and fastidious people that are to be found side by side with Brutus, Mandane, Cyrus, and Clelia.

But if her historical errors, if her compliance with the tone of overstrained sentiment which she found established, were faults for which Mademoiselle de Scudéry justly suffered, the spirit and vigour with which Cyrus is painted, the lofty tone of his feelings, the breadth and daring of his enterprises, many of which end with terrible disasters, a certain grandeur which is not in any particular part of the story, but in all that touches this her favourite hero, assuredly entitle her to great praise, and show a power of drawing character which she possessed, but did not always exercise.

Her portraiture of Mandane is also to a certain degree successful. The pride of royal birth, of beauty, of virtue, are very well shown in this princess. Nor, perfect though she seems to be, is she without faults. Half her misfortunes spring from the hasty and credulous temper of a woman too much accustomed to flattery to suppose that any will dare to deceive her. But though easily persuaded and easily led, she has no great faith after all, because she has no great love. Rumour, the testimony of strangers, satisfy her that Cyrus is inconsistent, as easily as mere professions convince her that Mazare, of whom she knows nothing, will be faithful. She believes in the death of Cyrus with the same frivolous facility, and with a mixture of selfishness and folly, her great thought on learning his death is to secure her own safety by flying with the bearer of the tidings. Her modesty, her loveliness, her elegant and

refined manners, throw a veil over these failings — but a slight one; the real man in Cyrus is always a hero, the real woman in Mandane is always worldly and cold.

Yet character is not Mademoiselle de Scudéry's *forte*, not even in her prettiest episodes: she thought much more of manners than of men, of society than of human nature, of refined perplexities than of real joys and sorrows. There is something fictitious even in her best efforts, and when they verge upon truth it is a worldly truth. Her light, lady-like comedy never for a moment loses the polite deceptions in use amongst well-bred people. We cannot give a better sample of her manner in this respect than in the following passage, which occurs in the episode of the absent lover.

Telesilla, a beautiful but poor girl, has a wealthy and avaricious uncle, Crantor. She is expected to be his heir, and a host of lovers sigh for her future riches as well as her beauty. Androclides, though a wealthy man, will not venture to marry her without her uncle's consent; he solicits his handsome sister, Attalia, to seek Crantor's society, and persuade him to bestow Telesilla upon himself, in preference to her other suitors. Attalia is as shrewd and as covetous as her brother, and, like him, she can put a fair show on mean feelings. What he calls love she calls sacrifice, and between the two truth is out of the question. She has succeeded, and she tells him so — but not at what price, until she thinks him committed.

"My dear sister," answered he, "what shall I not owe you if the long conversations you have had with Crantor have induced him to be reasonable? I entreat you to forgive me for having made you spend so much time with a man of a past age, and whose avaricious temper does not render him very entertaining."

"Brother," she said, "I see you do not understand how you are to marry Telesilla — therefore I must tell you," she perversely continued, "that it is only by my sacrificing myself for you, and depriving myself of every sort of pleasure."

"I shall be very unhappy," answered Androclides, "if my happiness must render you miserable; but let me hear this strange condition, which I cannot imagine."

"It is," she said, half blushing and half laughing, "that Crantor assuredly takes me for a treasure, and therefore wants me to become his."

"Androclides was so amazed that he could not believe he had heard her right.

"'Crantor wants you to be his!' he interrupted; 'and how so?'

"'He means,' she answered, without emotion, 'to give you Telesilla when I marry him — so that on my will depends your happiness. To marry a man of his age and temper is not a thing I can do without reluctance; nevertheless, such is my friendship for you, that your happiness with Telesilla will comfort me infinitely more than all Crantor's treasures.'

"Whilst Attalia spoke thus, Androclides was so amazed that he scarcely knew what to answer. He was ashamed to let his sister know that avarice was as strong as love in his heart, and he took a turn which he thought very ingenious.

"'My dear sister,' said he, 'I cannot consent to have you unhappy for life for my sake. I passionately love Telesilla, but I shall never marry her if I must oblige you to marry Crantor.'

"'My dear brother,' she said, 'if there were other means I would not take this, but I am generous enough to oblige you in spite of yourself. I know,' she pursued, 'that in your heart you already wish me to be Crantor's wife, and that you only oppose it through generosity; for I am sure you do not think I am so avaricious as to find as much pleasure in Crantor's riches as chagrin in his temper. Thus being convinced that through me only you can be happy, I shall know how to make you happy without your consent, and in spite of yourself.'

"'My dear sister,' he answered, 'I shall never allow it. Consider the years of Crantor, his avaricious, his sour temper, and all his faults.'

"'Brother, I will only consider the loveliness of Telesilla, whose possession will make you happy.'

In vain he protests that all Telesilla's charms cannot compensate for the exquisite misery of knowing his beloved sister's unhappiness — his beloved sister is bent on her heroic sacrifice. He makes, however, one desperate effort; he entreats her to consider that in marrying Crantor she will injure Telesilla, since she will deprive her of her expected inheritance, and his fears that Telesilla's resentment will fall on himself.

But his adroit sister calmly replies, that, on the contrary,

Telesilla being poor, will be all the more willing to make a good match — ‘so that there is no risk for you,’ she perfidiously adds, ‘and all the pain is for me.’

What between Attalia’s anxiety to secure a rich husband, and Androclides’s resolve not to marry a poor wife, Telesilla loses her uncle’s inheritance and her lovers. She is lovely, amiable, and good, but she is not the divine Mandane, and has not the imprescriptible right of being always adored for her own sake.

Many such quiet bits of satire there are in the ten volumes of the “Cyrus;” many such aspects of a life and a love neither heroic nor sublime — but who cares to seek for them now? Who would wade through such a sea of adventures and digressions in search of this delicate satire?

Descriptions have become one of the features of modern fiction. It is curious to see them in their dawn in the “Grand Cyrus.” They are long, minute, and rarely beautiful, though they show a sense of beauty for which the French writers of that age get no credit. Fénelon’s “Télémachus” is almost solitary in its pictures of lovely landscape, beautiful indeed, but of a classic beauty, as fictitious in its way as the gardens of Versailles. La Fontaine had the descriptive power, but he used it sparingly. Corneille and Racine dealt with heroes and princes, not with nature. Mademoiselle de Scudéry, the first volume of whose “Cyrus” was published before the future Archbishop of Cambray was born, may be fairly considered a true representative of description in that age.

One of the chief features in her descriptions is, that they are not poetic, and therefore not suggestive. She described, in order that we should know the places and things she wrote about; to waken certain emotions, pleasing or terrible, was rarely her object. Her accounts of palaces, of dwellings and their furniture, are as minute as an architect’s or an upholsterer’s. She takes us into houses and describes the blue velvet couch with its silver-trimmed cushions, the picture above it with its heathen gods and goddesses; the recess, with its books; the garden, with its fountains and its parterres; and we cannot help reading with interest, knowing, as we do, that the description is literal — that the house was an opulent friend’s, that she who wrote enjoyed the hospitality of that luxurious home, the freshness and the beauty of those gar-

In the same spirit she looked at nature. She described it so accurately as to exclude imagination. Here and there, however, we find touches which show us a quick feeling of the calmness of moonlit southern nights, when the barge glides on the rippling sea within view of the bay and its sleeping city, and exquisite music rises in the air and charms the happy listeners into silence.

But though there is the dawn of poetic beauty and feeling in her account of a lovely day and night spent on a lake — which, with the river that passes through it, is considered to have been meant for the lake of Geneva — there is also singular stress laid on the physical fact that this lake is traversed by a great river. The snowy mountains, the austere and lovely scenes that enclose that inward sea, are not mentioned, the river is never once forgotten. We are reminded of it on every occasion, even in the reflections of the stars broken in its waters, calm and clear in those of the lake. Like the young and the ignorant, Mademoiselle de Scudéry seems to have been more easily affected by what was singular and wonderful than by that mere beauty which ever stands higher the more the mind is cultivated.

If we want to know, in another respect, how much her ideal of romantic beauty differed from ours, and even from that embodied in the well-known line of Milton's "Penseroso," a poem written nearly twenty years before the "Cyrus" appeared,

"With antique pillars, massy proof,"

we need only compare it with a similar expression in her pretty and exact description of Provence. "On the summit of this mountain stands an irregularly built tower, which, antique though it be, yet greatly adorns this part of the landscape."

In Milton, the word antique is introduced to heighten the dreamy charm of the cloisters. In Mademoiselle de Scudéry it is the statement of a fact, and we are carefully informed that its antiquity does not detract from the striking effect of the tower.

Ah! how Mademoiselle de Scudéry and her friends would have wondered if a few of the romances and novels of the last age and of this could have been laid before them! What would they have thought to find the severest aspects of nature

worshipped with almost frantic enthusiasm; and what they would have considered a hideous mass of ruins and decayed masonry made the very foundation of all interest, pathos, and fervour? What! an old abbey mouldering away, a crumbling castle, the nest of some Gothic eagle, the dungeon-keep, the frightful prison of some wretched victim, these superseding Mandane with her golden locks and blue eyes; or Cyrus, with his haughty heroic beauty, and his wondrous feats of arms! Incredible perversion of the human mind, strange fall of the intellect! No wonder that "Clelia," that "Cyrus," were neglected by this erring posterity.

They were spared that pang. They did not even foresee that vital change, which, though its first shock is much weakened, still affects the whole literature of our day. They were even convinced that, though ill-natured critics might laugh, there were yet days of honour in store for works so full of gentle lessons, of wise advice, and pleasant entertainment. Little did they suppose that sixty or eighty years would be the limit of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's power; that stray copies, lingering in old *châteaux* or tranquil dwellings, might, during that time, connect her publicly with the generations of the eighteenth century; that Madame de Genlis would be one of the last genuine readers of "Clelia," in her childhood — as Walter Scott, a boy, was of "Cyrus;" that the last edition of her works would be published twenty years after her death, after which the shelves of public libraries would soon be their only certain home, the satires of her detractors would be their only hold on fame.

CHAPTER V.

"Clelia."

"CLELIA, a Roman history," is in ten volumes, like the "Grand Cyrus," on which it followed closely; but it has not more than seven thousand pages. It is Mademoiselle de Scudéry's last great work, her worst, too, and that which contains, however, some of the pleasantest and shrewdest things she wrote. Its misfortune is that it lacks the vigour and spirit which flash out of the pages of the "Great Cyrus," and redeem that romance from the fatal reproach of too much sweetness. The accounts of battles, of sieges, and perilous adventures are

fewer, the episodes and conversations are much longer. Mademoiselle de Scudéry wrote it alone, and free from her brother's superintendence. But she was already confirmed in the faults she owed to his early guidance, and the benefit which she derived from his assistance she lost. Instead of his advice, she had that of effeminate *beaux esprits*, more refined, more delicate than George de Scudéry; but whose blunders were far more fatal than his. To these we owe the introduction of the Map of Tenderness, and the love riddles exchanged between Brutus and Lucretia: deplorable errors, which for ever connected ridicule with the name of Scudéry and of Clelia.

"There never was a more beautiful day than that which was to precede the nuptials of the illustrious Arontius and the admirable Clelia."

Thus begins, and in a style which, if we omit the "illustrious" and the "admirable," is essentially modern, the most abused of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's works. A florid description, more abundant in epithets than in images, takes us to the banks of the Vulturnus, and the outskirts of Capua, that most voluptuous of cities. We see the two lovers surrounded by relatives and friends, walking in a beautiful landscape, beneath a cloudless sky.

Arontius has eagerly seized on this opportunity of saying a few words of love to the reserved Clelia, who listens shyly, when a sudden change occurs; the beauty of the day is gone, the earth trembles and opens, flames rise from the yawning gulf; Arontius remains on one side, and on the other he beholds his betrothed borne away by his rival Horatius, the same who later owns the name of Coclès, famous in Roman story. The tale, thus begun on the eve of a wedding-day, goes on through the ten volumes, until we are happily brought to the end, and to the real marriage in the last. Tedious though this history is, we will attempt to lead the reader through the meander of adventures which beset the illustrious Arontius and the admirable Clelia.

Satisfied that his mistress is living, Arontius goes in search of her, as soon as the disasters and ruins caused by the earthquake allow him to do so. He sees her with Horatius on lake Thrasymene, pursues them uselessly, delivers Mezentius, Prince of Perugia, from his enemies, and is borne wounded to the island of the willows, with his friend Adherbal, Prince of

Numidia. Whilst his wound is healing, we are told his origin and the history of his love for Clelia.

Arontius is the son of Porsenna, King of Clusium. That sovereign is unjustly imprisoned by his father-in-law, Mesentius. So long has he been parted from his wife, Galerite, that he does not know of the birth or existence of their child. Scarcely was Arontius born, when, to save him from his grandfather's wrath, he was shipped off to Carthage. The vessel on which his nurse and her husband had taken passage was wrecked, and the child was found, saved, and reared by Clelius and his wife, Sulpitia, Roman fugitives, driven to Africa by the tyranny of the last Tarquin, and whose own infant son was lost in the same tempest, which had nearly proved fatal to Arontius. A few years after these events, Sulpitia had a daughter, Clelia, whom Arontius learned to love as a sister, until a distant journey, which parted them for years, and brought him to Carthage when she was in the full bloom of youth and beauty, changed the nature of his tenderness.

But a foundling, reared by the charity of Clelius, who will give his daughter to none save a Roman, a man who knows not from what blood, obscure or ignoble, he springs, cannot aspire to the hand of a maiden who has it in her power to reject the alliance of princes. Whilst he endeavours to conquer his silent passion, two of his friends, Adherbal, Prince of Numidia, and Horatius, a Roman, press theirs with indifferent success. To a love-letter of the latter, Clelia returns a severe answer, in which occurs the following sentence, worthy of the divine Mandane; — "The man who writes me a love-letter must either have lost his senses, or be willing to forfeit my friendship, and incur my hatred."

It must be confessed, however, that when Arontius, unable to remain silent any longer, commits the same daring act, he is more mildly received; but though Clelia is favourable, though her mother is for him, he is no Roman, and it is only after a series of adventures, when Clelius, his family and the lovers, have removed from Carthage to Capua, been delivered from Corsairs by the bravery of Arontius — only after numerous jealousies, misunderstandings, and quarrels, by looks, that Clelia is at length granted to her lover by her father, whose life he has saved a second time. No sooner is the marriage agreed upon, than the illustrious birth of Arontius is discovered, and but for that unfortunate earthquake

which divided him from his betrothed on the eve of the happy day, Mademoiselle de Scudéry's tale might have been comprised in one volume.

There is not much interest or merit in this development of the mutual passion of the illustrious Arontius and the admirable Clelia; but one of the most curious, characteristic, and unfortunate passages in the romance occurs in this first volume. We allude to that map of the kingdom of Tenderness which excited so much ridicule at the time, and is still, though most unjustly, considered the true criterion of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's taste. To Clelia herself is attributed the invention of this map; it does honour to her ingenuity. At the bottom lies the town of New Friendship, the beginning of all tenderness. Three rivers, Inclination, Esteem, and Gratitude, lead us to the three different cities of Tenderness — for there are no less. Swift are the waters of Inclination; so rapid is their course on to Tenderness, that none require accommodation along their shores; accordingly, there is not so much as a village to be seen on either bank. We start from New Friendship, sail down Inclination, and reach Tenderness without once stopping on the way. But not so when Esteem is our route, and Tenderness upon Esteem our goal. Numerous are the resting-places provided for travellers by the ingenious Clelia. Much Wit is our first stage, then come Pretty Verses, Polite Notes, and Billets-doux. To get on faster, we have Sincerity, Great Heart, Honesty, Generosity, Respect, Punctuality, and Goodness, which lies close to Tenderness, to shew us that there can be no esteem without goodness, and that, unless we possess that precious gift, Tenderness upon Esteem cannot be reached.

The road from New Friendship to Tenderness upon Gratitude, is no less carefully marked out.

From Complaisance you go to the village of Submission, near which lies the pleasant hamlet of *Petits Soins*. Thence we must pass through Assiduousness, to the village called Zeal, "and not do like certain quiet people, who will not hurry one moment, howsoever entreated to do so, and who are incapable of feeling the zeal that obliges so greatly." Next comes Great Services, a small village, for it is visited by few; then Sensibility, to show that we must feel the lightest troubles of those we love; then Affection, for liking wins liking; then Obedience, than which nothing more binds the heart; then Constant

Friendship, the surest of all roads to Tenderness upon Gratitude. But as there is no road that has not a wrong turning, Clelia shows us that if, on leaving New Friendship, the travellers move a little too much to the right, they surely miss their way, for Neglect lies close to Much Wit; and Uneven Temper, Coolness, and Forgetfulness would lead them to the sluggish lake of Indifference. The turn to the left is no less fatal: Indiscretion, Perfidy, Pride, Slander, and Wickedness bring us straight to the sea of Strife, on whose tempestuous waves every vessel is wrecked.

Such was the map, and Clelia's object in drawing it was, we are told, to imply by those different roads that many good qualities were required to win her tender friendship. "This prudent maiden, also wishing to show, through this map, that she never had known love, and would never feel anything but tenderness, has made the river of Inclination throw itself into a sea, which is called the dangerous sea, because it is perilous for a woman to go beyond the last limits of friendship; and beyond this sea she has placed *the unknown regions*, because we do not know what lies there, and that we do not think anyone has gone farther than Hercules."

If this allegorical map proved the delight of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's friends and admirers, it also found its detractors from the first, and the author did not send it forth to the world without a consciousness of the perils which awaited it. She represents Clelia as having invented it merely for her own amusement, and as very reluctant to show it, "unwilling that persons who knew not how it originated, and who were incapable of understanding its delicacy, should talk of it according to their caprice or coarseness of their minds." That both Clelia and Mademoiselle de Scudéry were very uneasy about it, is apparent. However, we are assured that, save by "a few coarse and malicious people, whose approbation Clelia did not care for, it was spoken of with praise." Unfortunately for Clelia and her map, Boileau and Molière ranked amongst those malicious people; and an allegory, which was ingenious, but much too sweet — and sternness or gravity is required for this artificial composition — has gone down to posterity with an amount of ridicule beneath which much wit, fine and delicate feelings, and ingenious thoughts have lain concealed for two centuries. And yet what subtlety and grace there is in the account of tenderness in friendship, a little before that un-

fortunate map. How wise and delightful a book might yet be made out of the conversations in that much-abused Clelia! None of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's works show us better the foundation of her real hold on the public of her day. The young, the imaginative, the impulsive, may have been charmed with her stories, they may have delighted in the virtue and severe coldness of Clelia, in the magnanimous rivalry of Arontius and Adherbal, in all that still pleases the noble-minded and the credulous in modern romance; they may have liked, too, the earthquakes, the carrying off of damsels, the shipwrecks, and the pirates; that school still lives, and though it has learned to look more real, it is pretty much what it was in Mademoiselle de Scudéry's days; but for the older, the wiser, and the sadder readers, whom this accomplished lady also had to please, what a mine of delight must those long discourses on human passions and feelings, on the manners, ridicules, and follies of men and women, those episodes of coquettes, flirts, and jealous or dissatisfied lovers, have afforded. They were, indeed, the true prelude to one of the most delightful books of that age: La Bruyère's Essays.

To make up for the room given to those polite arguments and endless conversations, the adventures of Arontius and Clelia are of the strongest cast. Arontius recovers his parents, Porsenna and Galerite, and compels his tyrant grandfather, Mezentius, to liberate them from their long captivity. He wins battles, takes cities, delivers Clelia from the hands of Horatius, but sees her fall into those of Tarquin and Sextus. He becomes the friend, or rather the companion, of that profligate prince, in order to be near his mistress; and with Sextus, Collatin, and Brutus, he pays that evening visit to Lucretia which proved so fatal to the rule of the Tarquins in Rome.

King Tarquin, and his secret foe, Brutus, are among the prominent characters of the tale. Tarquin loves Clelia with a fierce and savage love, and Brutus pines for Lucretia with foolish fondness. It is rather trying to learn that this chaste matron married Collatin to save the life of Brutus, and to find the most implacable of Romans exchanging love riddles with his mistress. Equally perplexing is the extraordinary importance of Clelia. Tullia threatens to set fire to the royal palace, in order to get rid of her rival; Horace, who holds out in Ardea, makes her liberty a condition of the peace; the father of Arontius, on the contrary, insists on her captivity; and even

Brutus, in his great appeal to the Romans, finds room, midst his indignation and grief, to urge Clelia's liberation. The fatal end of Lucretia is badly and feebly told, in a few words; to make amends, the oration of Brutus over her corpse is several close pages long. To talk, ever to talk, is the attribute of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's characters.

The fall of the Tarquins brings complications which affect the lovers. Clelia discovers her long-lost brother in Adherbal, and Arontius is imprisoned by his father, Porsenna, for refusing to fight against the Romans. Diplomacy does her best to smooth these difficulties. The Princess of Leontium is sent to Rome to treat for Tarquin and Porsenna — a very French view of state affairs, and natural enough in the age that had seen a woman sent to Poland with all the honours and prerogatives of an ambassador, and that was to witness the power and rule of Madame des Ursins.

Porsenna's camp is the last stage of this eventful history. Mutius Scævola attempts the king's life, not exactly to deliver Rome, as we thought, but to touch the heart of a lovely Roman lady, Valeria; and Arontius, accused of being his accomplice, is kept so close a prisoner, that he scarcely gets a glimpse of Clelia, who, with other noble Roman maidens, had been given to Porsenna as hostages for her country.

Sextus has always had a dangerous admiration for the mistress of Arontius, he now renews his pursuit, and Lucretia appears in a dream to the young girl, and bids her fly. Clelia obeys, and shewing her friends the way home, she boldly swims across the Tiber, and effects her escape. History adds that she was returned to Porsenna, but omits to say that Sextus carried her off on her way to the camp — that Horatius Cocles and Octavius, attempting to deliver her, were made prisoners by the ravisher — and that Arontius, having got loose from his prison for that express purpose, delivered them all, sent Clelia back to Rome, then once more constituted himself a prisoner. A second time the Romans send Clelia to Porsenna; and this time the monarch, conquered by her magnanimity, and convinced of his son's innocence, does not merely permit but desire their marriage, which is celebrated with due solemnity.

Of the three elements which prevail in the "Grand Cyrus," the story, the episodes, and the conversations, the latter predominate most in "Clelia;" and it is fortunate — for, there is

no denying it, the story is painfully absurd. The Assyrians, the Greeks even, leave some room to the imagination; there is about both an eastern splendour, a voluptuous grace, and a sort of vagueness that partake of the nature of fable. But Rome, mighty Rome, Rome terrible and austere, stands out distinct and stern in solitary greatness! Romance cannot touch a city which boasted that her limits were those of the world, and scorned a narrower empire: *Est Urbis et Orbis idem*. Her records were written in the woes of nations — her deeds, fearful or sublime, still waken admiration or abhorrence — her very joys were steeped in blood. To link Rome with even solemn fiction would be an egregious blunder — there is no space in Rome for anything beyond Rome herself, and her vastness cannot be measured. But to call Rome to share the counsels of lovers — to take those grand, melancholy Romans — women and men who lived and died for Republican liberty — and turn them into modern beaux and belles, is an attempt beneath criticism. We will not linger upon it — it is not needed; even Mademoiselle de Scudéry's cotemporaries, who had tolerated "Cyrus," were startled at "Clelia."

We have shewn how the story was constructed, how the characters and events were perverted; it is enough! — it is pleasanter to seek in "Clelia" that which is really good: the graceful episodes, the delicate arguments, the gentle teaching the author wished to enforce, and the power of which her cotemporaries admitted.

The conversation between Tullia and her sister is a whole declaration of the rights of woman, suited to the age in which it was written; and instructive, as showing against what obstacles Mademoiselle de Scudéry had to contend. Tullia's sister considers the condition of woman happy, and would not change her sex. "It has," she gently declares, "a thousand advantages; it enjoys perpetual peace. Honour compels men to go to war, and forbids us. Beauty, as the Prince of Ameriole justly says, is ours; we share the honours of our parents, and all the advantages of those to whom we are united. We need not even take the trouble of studying arts and sciences; ignorance is not a fault in us; we are not asked to be brave; in short, a small share of personal attractions, a mediocre intellect, and a great deal of modesty, are enough for a woman; whereas a man, to be distinguished, requires a thousand great qualities, natural or acquired." To this Tullia indignantly answers that

if, to acquire reputation, a woman need only possess a very small number of good qualities, this fact is not honourable to her, for it is equal to saying that she can possess no more.

"Ah, Madame," here interposes the polite Prince of Ameriole, "I must be the protector of your sex against yourself, for I am convinced that the ladies are capable of every great virtue, and that they have even more wit than we have. For, indeed, if we observe men and women with care in places where their education is almost equal — in the country for instance — you will find that women appear to have more wit than men, and thence we must conclude that you have been more favoured by nature than we have."

"I agree with you in this," replied Tullia; "and, to speak in a general way, we have much imagination and much wit; but it must also be concluded that we have little spirit to be satisfied with being the first slave in a family, and often the most unhappy and the worst treated. We have not even the liberty of choosing our masters, since we are often married against our inclination; and thus this great and marvellous wit of ours is spent on trifles, and the most esteemed women are they who use their intellect least, hide it most carefully, and only think of acquiring one virtue, which to my seeming is not hard of practice. But as the world has chosen to fancy that women are weak, and have some pains in avoiding to love when they are beloved, they must live with so much restraint that the only virtue allowed them yields them little honour, since so much care is thought necessary for a woman to preserve it. For indeed we must learn to rule our looks, to avoid the conversation of pleasing persons, and never go anywhere alone. Travels are forbidden, solitude even is often misinterpreted; and we are so unfortunate, that if the world does not know what we are doing, it thinks wrong of us, and we must always have some person to answer for our actions, if we don't wish them to be taken amiss. As the world goes, indeed, we are born with passions which we must keep chained, for we are allowed to love and to hate nothing. Ambition is useless to us. Obedience is our lot. Judge, after that, if I am not right in wishing to be a brave soldier instead of what I am. Indeed, I can assure you there is no day but I envy the other sex. When I see a man walking alone, I envy his freedom; when another goes off travelling, I envy him again; and I envy the anger and the vengeance of some — for it is not thought

strange that a man should resent a wrong and avenge it, and it can scarcely be tolerated that a woman should complain of anything, or, if she does complain, it must be so meekly that her colour does not change, and that her eyes lose none of their softness. Indeed, one might imagine that nature has given us no feelings, such are the laws custom enjoins on us; and I can assure you that I murmur strangely against all who made them."

"For my part," said the Princess, "I am happy that the poverty of my intellect should help my happiness. I find that my sex has a thousand advantages. The only virtues we are forbidden are the hard ones. It even seems to me more honourable to reign without strength than by violence, and I think nothing easier than to submit to propriety. Ambition must not indeed be the passion of ladies, but it is so tumultuous a feeling, that it appears to me an advantage to be free from it."

"As we all reason according to our own humour," abruptly answered Tullia, "I do not find it strange that we should think differently; for it often pleases you to walk in the shade, to gather flowers, to make nosegays, to hear the birds sing, or a stream murmur, or to hold purposeless discourse; but I am not so, and what amuses you wearies me."

Between Tullia's ardour and the Princess's tameness probably lay Mademoiselle de Scudéry's own opinions; she has not expressed them openly, and we can only surmise them from the frequency with which they recur. Woman's wrongs is, however, only one of the hundred themes broached in "Clelia." No subject, light or grave, came amiss to Amilcar, Herminius, Plotina, or Valeria; no spot but was suited to their endless arguments. Porsenna's camp, Tarquin's palace, a prison, a tent, the country, all answered Mademoiselle de Scudéry's purpose. She had always at hand a number of agreeable ladies and gentlemen, whom neither sieges, battles, nor calamities could deter from story-telling or polite argument. Letter writing, always an eminent accomplishment in France, epitaphs, tenderness in friendship, indolence and its pleasures, truth, ambition, love in all its phases, and under all its aspects, are discussed with a judgment and a delicacy which, had not her style been too prolix and too careless, would have given Mademoiselle de Scudéry a high rank amongst essayists. But she neglected brevity in style, as in

all else; and if she said many new and charming things, she was followed by others who said them better, and took up much less room to say them. The progress of literature has left us little to learn from her pages, but the argument on the cheerful and melancholy mistress is a remarkable proof of the injustice with which she was treated. We confess, we very much doubt if it did not suggest to Molière the speech in which he attacked her writings. Amilcar's comments on the world of trouble it gives a man to love a sentimental woman is more delicate, but not less severe, than Molière's attack on overstrained sentiment — and it came first.

"When a man loves a melancholy lady," says Amilcar, "*he must love her according to rule*; he must pay her much homage and sigh a long time. His confessions of love must be skilfully delivered; he must serve her in great as well as in little things; he must give her praises, sweetness, tenderness, transports, assiduity, and a *little despair* besides. And then there are the polite notes, the tender notes, and a thousand other things, which it would be too tedious to mention, and after all your trouble, you are loved or you are not. If you are not, you have lost much time; and if you are, you are generally loved too much. For out of a hundred melancholy ladies, there are not two but are jealous and hard to deal with, and drive you to despair with their endless lamentations. Thus, a man is often more unhappy when they have given him their affection than when they withhold it." After equally severe strictures on the proud and capricious ladies, Amilcar proceeds to give his somewhat ironical preference to the merry ones.

"First of all, a merry one is more easily won; then you can possess her in peace, and if she has some little touch of jealousy, *you pacify her with a serenade*. The quarrels are all slight, and the reconciliations are all spent in *fêtes* and amusements. I know, indeed, that these fair merry ones do not love you quite so ardently, but then they do not exact to be so terribly loved either. They give as much liberty as they take, which is neither unjust nor painful. They only require pleasing things; for they like to promenade, to amuse themselves, to laugh, to sing, and to dance. Is it hard to do all this for their sakes? And is it not better to serve them than those other ones, who have framed the *morals* and the *politics* of love, which one must know exactly in order to be loved in

return, and in whose code sighs and tears are reckoned as delights?"

The argument goes on, however, and the fair melancholy ones find an able defender in Celere; but we have not room for his enthusiastic encomiums of their charms. The peculiar subtlety which is displayed in this conversation is continued, and more effectually shown, in the episode with which it is illustrated by one of the speakers. We will give some account of it, not for the sake of the story, but because it shows in its dawn one of the most remarkable features in the writings of French novelists: skill in analysis, and, as a consequence of that skill, a predilection for characters and incidents by which it can be developed. Whenever a good French novel has been written, within the last two hundred years, and has not been openly the offspring of a foreign literature, like "*Gil Blas*," or the historical romances, for instance, analysis of the subtlest and often most tormenting kind has been one of its first features; and whenever within the same period a novel not French, but bearing that feature, has appeared, French influence has been stamped on it from its birth.

Artaxander, visiting the Isle of Creta, there met in some delightful gardens outside the city with a young, joyous, and beautiful girl, named Pasithea. Their acquaintance began with jests and raillery, and ended in a love as serious as their lively temper allowed. Artaxander was charmed with his mistress, her vivacity was delightful; her constant cheerfulness, her sunny nature, were irresistible attractions in the eyes of a man who liked pretty and lively women. In short, nothing seemed wanting to render his happiness complete, when an unfortunate truth came to his knowledge. Pasithea had had another lover, whom she had loved as tenderly as her undoubted virtue allowed — Philicrates, a handsome, accomplished gentleman, devoted to her, who had risked his fortune and ventured his life in her cause, and who had now been dead four months!

It is not jealousy Artaxander feels on learning this; it is a deeper feeling. Pasithea, his dear mistress, is heartless, he cannot doubt it. He knew Philicrates well, though he did not know of his love, and it was in his arms that his rival died; that Pasithea should have loved such a man living and forget him as soon as he was dead, revolts Artaxander as much as if that dead man's loss were not his gain. Unable to keep silent,

he mentions the subject to his mistress, and, to her great surprise, he reproaches her with her coldness and ingratitude.

"Seriously, Madam," he says to her, after a long and vexing discourse on this strange matter, "I am grieved at heart to see that you know so little how to love, and that you should have loved so coldly the most amiable of men."

"I assure you," she answered, "that I loved him as much as I can love, and that I love you no more."

"I believe it, Madam," he replied; "I believe it easily, for my rival was much handsomer than I am — he had served you in a thousand ways, he had done a thousand things for you which I have not done, and I no more doubt your having loved him than I doubt your loving me. You must not therefore think it strange that I am grieved at the little love you had for him, and the little regret you felt for his loss. For, Madam, I say it again, I wish I had consoled you, I wish I had seen you weep the first time I saw you, instead of seeing you laugh, and that I had made your tears cease to flow."

"But if you had seen me weep," answered she, laughing, "you would not have loved me; and, far from seeking me eagerly, you would have shunned me carefully; I do not see therefore, what you complain of."

"I complain, Madam," he resumed, "that you did not love my rival enough — for, since you love me less, as I am convinced, it is important for my repose that I should think you loved him much; thus it is not so strange as you fancy I should be grieved that his loss did not grieve you."

"I do not say that I love you less than I loved him," said Pasishea; "but, as I am candid, I confess that I do not love you more, and that I cannot love more."

"I believe you, Madam, I believe you," abruptly answered Artaxander; "I believe you, but too much for my happiness — for, when I remember that an absent lover is almost a dead one for a person of your turn of mind; when I think that, as soon as I cease to see you, you will be as if you had never seen me, I feel a degree of vexation I cannot paint to you. Moreover, as my fancy is quick and ready, I imagine that, if I were dead or away, you would within a month begin a new love with some other."

Whereupon Artaxander concludes that common prudence bids him break with Pasishea.

On this resolve he acts, and by going to the country he shuns the danger of his light but lovely mistress's presence.

Another lovely lady cures him effectually. Cynesia is extremely beautiful, and her beauty strikes him the more that a romantic adventure makes him find her asleep in his apartment. He sees her awake, and, charmed with her loveliness, and her amiable temper, he becomes deeply enamoured. Cynesia is not very lively, and she certainly, is not original. A poor gentleman named Clidamis is amongst her adorers, but she cannot love him, she assures him, for the excellent reason that he has never been loved.

"I never wear a riband which others do not wear," she frankly tells him; "just fancy if I would give my heart to a lover so unfortunate as never to have got one before mine!"

This unlucky objection not applying to Artaxander, he is favourably received, and finally becomes the accepted lover of Cynesia.

But here, too, this fastidious gentleman is haunted by the spectre of a predecessor. This time he does not complain that his rival has not been loved enough, but too much. Cynesia's virtue is as undoubted as was Pasithea's, but Artaxander's pride is stung to the quick at the mere thought of succeeding one of the most foolish and ridiculed men in the whole land, Alphimedon. In vain a mutual friend pleads that her affection was innocent, and that it is over, the subtle and self-tormenting Artaxander will not admit that the woman who loves a fool can be innocent.

"When I remember all the foolish things I have seen done by Alphimedon," he says, "and all I have heard of him, I am so much ashamed to have succeeded him in Cynesia's heart, that, beautiful and lovely as she is, she ceases to please me when I think that Alphimedon has pleased her. I consider her heart as a spot profaned, in which I will reign no more. I even think I shall cease to find that she has beautiful eyes, since they have looked favourably on Alphimedon; and I consider that since she has loved him she does me a wrong in loving me."

"Truly," said Philonte, "it would be strange if, after quarrelling with Pasithea, because she had not sufficiently loved a most deserving man, you were to quarrel with Cynesia because she has loved an unworthy one whom she loves no more."

"This is a much worse case than the other," replied Artaxander, "for it wounds both love and pride. The hatred of Cynesia would now be more flattering to me than her affection, since she has bestowed this on a worthless object, and I would rather she had been faithless in favour of some polite rival, than faithful to Alphimедon. Indeed, if I can overcome my passion for her, I shall certainly take a vow never to pledge myself to a woman without being careful to learn whom she has loved. For to come after a foolish rival is most humbling. It seems less shameful to me to have an unworthy father than to succeed Alphimедon. That a man cannot help, for we do not choose our parents, but we can either not offer our heart, or, having offered it, withdraw its homage when we learn that we cannot be loved unless we succeed a man of no worth."

So sore is Artaxander on this matter, that he seeks an explanation with Cynesia, in the hope that she has been slandered. Cynesia candidly acknowledges that she has loved Alphimедon, and that she would love him still, had he not been faithless. Artaxander laments his fate, and calls himself the most miserable of men.

"How could you love me," he asks, "since you loved Alphimедon? For surely I am not like him! — I do not speak, act, and think like him, and there cannot be two persons so different as Artaxander and Alphimедon. How then can he have pleased, and how can I please you? How can you have loved him and love me? How can the man I despise most, have been the man most esteemed by you?"

"I do not agree with you there," she answered; "I loved him from impulse, and I love you from impulse and knowledge."

"Then I entreat you, Madam, to take back that impulse, for I will share nothing with Alphimедon."

"I will even take back my heart," answers Cynesia, getting angry; and as Artaxander asks no better, the quarrel soon ends in a final breach.

Disgusted with love, and the predecessors whom he is doomed to find in ladies' hearts, Artaxander resolves that friendship is the only feeling with which woman shall inspire him.

In such passages do we see how much Mademoiselle de Scudéry's power and peculiar searching turn of mind have

penetrated French literature. She has been surpassed, her successors have gone farther and deeper, and brought many a bright gem, she never suspected, from the mines of human intellect and heart; but she came first; first she gathered many floating elements of restlessness, unquiet desire, aching void, and showed that of such the adventure of many a human life is made up. She gave point, too, quiet epigram, and a pretty artificial turn to her meaning. Marmontel, Voltaire himself, are in these respects her genuine descendants. Nay, take away the Heathen names, we can make a modern *nouvelle* or *vaudeville* of Artaxander's distresses, with this difference, that we must spoil the story, and give him a third mistress, an artless young creature, whose first love this fastidious man has certainly been. Mademoiselle de Scudéry knew better, and saw deeper — she knew that for such self-tormentors there is no cure, and justly left her Artaxander to the solitude of his irritable vanity and exacting pride.

CHAPTER VI.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry's Purpose.

AND now, before dismissing Mademoiselle de Scudéry, we may ask ourselves a few questions: What was the meaning of her works? — how did they influence her age? — and lastly, why did they pass away so quickly?

Her meaning is obvious — more than one she had; but one was eminent and apparent above the rest: the wish to improve the moral, social, and intellectual condition of women. For that she made love so potent; it is the source of woman's power. "I do not know what women would do if there were no passions," declares one of her characters; "if beauty did not stand instead of strength, it were better to be a handsome fly than a handsome woman." "This noble passion," as she calls it, Mademoiselle de Scudéry thought could be cultivated. She requires it to be lofty, ideal, and pure; she confesses "that the common people do not understand romantic love," thereby proving it to be the work of imagination and society; and she blames women if it is not more prevalent and better known. In her creed, to inspire a noble passion, and bind a great heart, a woman should herself be a noble creature.

With this lofty conception of what love can be, blended the accurate knowledge of what love is. Sometimes we have the ideal, sometimes the real aspect of the passion; but never the perilous divinity it has so often received from modern fiction. With her love is not virtue. To use her own words, "Love does not create virtuous inclinations, though it fosters them; the sun makes roses blow, but it does not plant rose-trees." These fair roses of love, Mademoiselle de Scudéry guarded with a tender hand; she showed the errors and dangers to which love is liable, as an involuntary feeling, and exacted the devotion, the virtue, and sacrifice which voluntary feelings can inspire. It is always hard to be true when there is an intention of teaching, and especially was it hard between such extremes. Mademoiselle de Scudéry's delineation of love has delicacy, finesse, and a general perception of truth; but it has no fervour, no passion, no sorrow, none of the grand marks of love in every time. It is a moral agent, meant to refine man and raise woman. What she intended it to be, appears very clearly in one of the conversations in the "Great Cyrus." Cydmon asks Sappho how she wishes to be loved, and the Lesbian poetess replied,

"Ardently, entirely, and with respect. It must be a tender and feeling love, take great pleasure in small things, have the solidity of friendship, and be founded on esteem and inclination. My lover must be faithful and sincere, he must tell his passion to none, and guard his feelings in his own breast, that I may boast I alone know them. He must tell me all his secrets, and share all my sorrows; my sight and conversation must constitute all his felicity, my absence be his affliction. He must say nothing that may make me suspect his love, and must always say that which will convince me it is enduring."

This love, indeed, is not to end in marriage, which Sappho proclaims a long slavery; but Sappho is here for Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and this is but an allusion to her private life, not a general and broad theory. Cydmon's next question leads to a pretty reply.

"After telling me how you wished to be loved, you must tell me how you wish to love."

"When I told you one I told you the other," answered Sappho.

This delicate love, founded on esteem and inclination, is not always born of beauty. Mademoiselle de Scudéry main-

tained the superior attractions of mind over person, though she prudently avoided severing them. She confessed, indeed, that pretty faces made more conquests than fine minds; but she argued, it was because more people had eyes to see than taste to discern; and that, as to love, one must know, so fools cannot love what they cannot value, though they love the beauty they can see. But, it may be asked, are they always fools who bestow their love on perishable beauty, and does the involuntary nature of love admit of selection? But if this reasoning be open to question, it illustrates Mademoiselle de Scudéry's most favourite lesson — the improvement of woman. Against two evils, she wished the ladies of her time to guard: ignorance and pedantry, ever the offspring of limited knowledge. She was most severe against ignorance. "Whosoever would attempt to put down what fifteen or twenty women say when they are together," observes one of her characters, "would write the worst book in the world."

No man ever uttered a severer sentence than this against the small talk of women. The blame of this intellectual inferiority Mademoiselle de Scudéry impartially divided between women themselves and the education they received from society. She complained that they read little; and that some ladies, though endowed by nature with no common share of wit, "would rather feel dull alone than take the habit of reading. Yet reading enlightens the mind and forms the judgment much more than conversation: this gives us a speaker's first thought; that gives us the last effort of an author's mind. So that even when we read merely for amusement, there yet remains something which adorns and improves the mind of the reader." The argument is no longer needed. Women now read more than men, for they have more time; and the evil is that books are made too light and too easy, precisely because they are now the majority of readers. Reading, not book-knowledge, was Mademoiselle de Scudéry's aim. Sappho quarrels with a lady named Damophile, because she uses big words to say little things, and talks like a book; but, on the other hand, she confesses herself frightened "to see our ladies of quality so grossly ignorant that they disgrace our sex. The difficulty of knowing something, and not being thought too learned, proceeds not from what a woman knows, but from the ignorance of the rest. The singularity of knowledge it is that causes it to be censured.

I know nothing more disgraceful to our sex than that a woman should not be obliged to learn anything. I wish, then, she were forbidden to talk and not taught writing; for if she is to do both, all that enlightens the mind, forms the judgment, and could teach her to talk and write well, ought to be allowed her. Is there anything stranger than the education of women? They must not be coquettes, and they are allowed to study all that concerns coquetry, and forbidden the knowledge which strengthens virtue and occupies the mind. They are scolded in their youth if they are not neat, if they do not dress well, if they do not mind their dancing. A woman can only dance five or six years, and must spend twelve learning it; and this same person, who is bound to have judgment till her death, who must talk till her last sigh, is taught nothing that could make her talk agreeably, or act with more propriety. From the fashion in which great ladies spend their days, one might fancy they were only born to sleep, to get stout, to be beautiful, do nothing, and say foolish things."

Sappho's zeal displeased some ladies. They held, that strict virtue required a woman to be no more "than her husband's wife, the mother of her children, and the mistress of her household." These same ladies thought that Sappho and her friends "gave too much time to conversation, and took pleasure in talking of more things than were needful." But notwithstanding these severe matrons, women will ever acknowledge with gratitude the efforts Mademoiselle de Scudéry made to waken the women of her time from intellectual sloth and ignorance; and posterity will scarcely think her standard of woman's education too lofty. To know how to spell, to like reading, and to think, are not now considered supererogatory accomplishments. The man most averse to female cultivation does not ask for gross ignorance or folly too palpable.

Such was Mademoiselle de Scudéry's great meaning in 'all she wrote; but she intended more than this: the curious conversation on novel writing, to which we have already alluded, explains the value she set on it, the use to which she thought it could be put, and her disappointment and annoyance at the light esteem in which it was held. Her favourite Herminius declares that history itself is nothing to a romance, for the novelist must know the world and its manners; he must have the art of polite conversation, pleasant, willing, and innocent

satire, verses, letter-writing, and oratory. He must also know the secrets of all hearts, and deprive morality of its harshness.

"And if you find one who can write such a book," says Amilcar, "you will also find plenty of people who will talk of it as a trifle and a useless amusement. I know many old senators and venerable matrons who are so frightened at love that they forbid their children to read such tales."

"Love is not learned in books," replies Herminius — "Nature teaches it to all men;" and he wonders that senators or matrons can check their children in reading which teaches the practice of every virtue, and gives, without the trouble of travelling, a most "noble and comprehensive picture of the world." He is even of opinion that such books would rather deter ladies from love than lead them into it — for they need only compare that which they inspire with that they read of, to grow hard-hearted.

"Do not tell me, then," he warmly adds, "that there are people so unreasonable as to censure a work like this, for, spite the risk, I wish I were author of one. Satisfied with my intentions I should take comfort under the severity of a few, in general approbation. Sufficient would be my own knowledge of the usefulness of such a work, where one can find experience without the help of old age, lessons without severity, pleasures without sin, innocent satires, judgment that costs one nothing, and the means of learning that art of the world without which one can never be agreeable."

"If you write such a work," said Plotina, "I promise you to read it with pleasure."

"For my part," added Clelia, "I promise Herminius my admiration."

"I promise him more than you do," said Valeria, "since I promise him to correct myself of several faults which I have."

"So far as I am concerned," said Anacreon, "I pledge myself to sing his glory."

"And I," said Amilcar, "promise to read him with pleasure, to esteem him much, to praise him everywhere, and to do nothing that he advises — for I only do that which I advise myself."

We do not think that Mademoiselle de Scudéry found none but Amilcars among her readers. We think, on the contrary, that if some grave matrons and senators, as she calls them, quarrelled with her romances, many did not merely take de-

light in them, but derived infinite advantage from their perusal. She found heroism in fiction, but to heroism she added delicacy and refinement. She taught men to prize more than mere beauty, and women to be something more than lovely. She shamed them into spelling, reading, and general information. Much of her work was undone after her. That exquisite modesty, the child of true refinement, which she preached and practised, was set aside. Frenchwomen were taught by Moliere that knowledge was pedantry, that delicacy was foolish. But for twenty years at least Mademoiselle de Scudéry was read, admired, and obeyed, as the greatest writer of fiction of her time. For twenty years she ruled her readers and gave them back, with all the weight of her authority, some of the lessons society had given her. Some, for not all were fit to be given. Her selection made them her own, and entitled her to all honour. In every time there are two paths open to a writer, because there are always two classes of readers to please: the pure, the refined, the gentle on the one hand — the coarse, the gay, the careless on the other. The distinction is often subtle, it always exists, and writers of genius or of great fame have the responsibility of lessening or adding to either of these multitudes. Where they are the majority will be. They are mighty orators, eloquent voices, born to rule and bear away the hearts of men. Mademoiselle de Scudéry was free to choose; she chose the most arduous course — that of pleasing without agitating the senses or leaving a stain on the mind; that of inculcating innocence, pure thoughts, pure feelings, and generous emotions. A noble selection, on which hung more than she herself thought. Her power, though brief, was boundless, and the habits of delicate and refined writing which her example confirmed, ruled the whole school of French novel-writing during the latter part of the seventeenth century.

How came it, then, that, spite such noble aims, and so much genuine influence, Mademoiselle de Scudéry was so soon and so completely forgotten? Her works were too long — she had talent, but no genius — her style was careless and diffuse — her sentences were endless — her repetitions frequent; she came, too, before the great writers of her age had given the French language its perfection and precision, and yet, when it had lost the originality and *naïveté* of the old idiom; but all these literary sins and disadvantages are surpassed by one, the most fatal of all — bad taste. Hers, indeed, was the bad

taste that precedes good taste, and Walpole has shrewdly remarked that of the two it is much to be preferred — but still it was bad taste. It was this caused her excellences to be forgotten, till the voice of her detractors alone was heard; and they were headed by two men whose power has survived their age, Boileau and Molière. Boileau disliked and ridiculed George de Scudéry; the sister he spared, but during her lifetime only. In 1664 or 1665, he composed his “*Dialogue des Héros des Romans*,” in which she was severely treated. This dialogue was not published, nor even written, for forty years; for though Boileau entertained his friends by reciting it, he felt reluctant to satirize “a person of infinite merit,” as he calls Mademoiselle de Scudéry, “and who, according to the testimony of those who have known her, had even more rectitude and honour than wit.”

Indeed, it was not her intellectual qualities he denied, but her misuse of them. He blamed her most for historical inaccuracy, exaggerations of style, want of truth in the flattering portraits she drew of her friends, and dangerous morality in making love the great object of her teaching. His criticism is just, but too literal and narrow. All these faults Mademoiselle de Scudéry shared with her age. Racine had Greeks and Romans, who savoured strongly of the poet's cotemporaries, and in his tragedies he perverted the feeling of antiquity as much as Mademoiselle de Scudéry in her romances.

The dialogue is amusing enough. Cyrus is made to appear before Pluto with all the languishing raptures of a lover. The great conqueror can only sigh and utter the name of Mandane. Horatius Cocles comes in singing the loveliness of Clelia, and that Roman virgin perplexes the King of Hell with her new map of the Kingdom of Tenderness. The austere Lucretia and the stern Brutus show themselves in the characters of lovers exchanging tender riddles; Mademoiselle de Scudéry appears under the name of Sappho, and a Parisian bourgeoisie recognises all the bourgeois and bourgeoises of his neighbourhood in Monsieur Brutus, Mademoiselle Clelia, and her friends.

Molière was no less severe, but he saw deeper and struck home. With marvellous skill he seized on all the weak points of her teaching. He too wanted to teach, but it was by withholding up with ridicule, affectation, and vice. Mademoiselle de Scudéry wished to improve, ennoble, and refine. Hers was

the better aim and the weaker means. Looking around her she saw the ignorance of women and the profligacy of men. She recommended knowledge to one sex and delicacy to the other. Opposite evils struck Molière. Alarmed at the dangerous invasion of female learning around him — did his wife know how to spell? — at the extreme delicacy of an age when ladies of virtue wrote what they would scarcely own to have read now, he gave the world two of his masterpieces, "*Les Précieuses Ridicules*," and "*Les Femmes Savantes*."

The harm done by Molière's learned ladies to the education of women was incalculable. It was a cruel and ungenerous attack; women were not too learned, as he knew, but too ignorant, and his sarcasms frightened them into further ignorance. Knowledge for them was not power, it was no honourable distinction, it was not even calm enjoyment, but a dangerous gift, for its mere possession was looked on with mistrust. It was ridicule, blame, and sarcasm. It was being called Belise, Philaminte, and Armande. For once the prejudices of his sex made Molière retrograde, and he forswore his privilege, as a man of genius, of seeing farther and better than his times.

He was more successful in another important question — love; for if he only gave the easy and often coarse aspect of the passion, his love was human and natural: Mademoiselle de Scudéry's too often was not. She had a right to idealize, but not to violate truth. When truth goes the ideal vanishes, and the cloudy Juno, clasped by vain-glorious Ixion, is not a more empty vision than the image of a perverted passion.

This fantastic and over-refined love Molière threw into immortal ridicule. With what feelings indeed must this joyous and practical mind have considered the love of Artemédore, for instance? This delicate lover, being nearly wrecked, stays on the sinking ship rather than leave it without his mistress's letters — he has a trunkful of them; better be drowned with them than live without them! Or again, how must Molière have enjoyed the following account of Cyprus and Paphos, where "love is not merely a passion as it is everywhere else, but a matter of necessity and good breeding. All the men must be enamoured and all the ladies beloved. There are no obdurate ones amongst us. Hardness of heart is held a crime and liberty is considered so shameful that they who are not in love at least pretend to be so. Custom does not indeed compel the ladies to love, but to allow themselves to be loved."

So rigorous, however, are these fair dames, that to be a lover and to be miserable are almost one. A platonic tenderness is the only reward the most faithful must expect. "Thus uniting innocence and love, the ladies lead a pleasant and agreeable life."

Do women ever grow old in that loving Paphos? — and when the jet or golden locks have turned into silver, are the lovers as fond and as faithful as in the fervour and heyday of youth? If men and women were immortal, if this world were an Eden, if age and its infirmities were a dream, love might wear this heavenly aspect and fill the human heart with those calm delights. But in a world of toil, action and strife, there is no room for love so Paphian; and though the novelist has the right of painting what should be, it is on the well understood condition of never painting that which cannot be.

Mademoiselle de Scudéry knew it well, for like her own Sappho she was skilled in the anatomy of hearts in love; but it pleased her now and then to take sublime flights, and it pleased Molière to forget that such was not her constant mood. His "*Précieuses Ridicules*" have read her romances and turned against herself her own gentle and ladylike satire of exaggerated feelings.

These two fastidious ladies, disgusted at so coarse and abrupt a proceeding as a proposal of marriage, assure their father and uncle that Cyrus cannot marry Mandane, and Arontius Clelia, in this sudden way; and that the wedding is only the fitting close to the other adventures.

"A lover, to be agreeable," says Madelon, "must know how to deliver fine sentiments. He must know how to urge the soft, the tender, the impassioned; and his wit must be according to rule. Firstly, he must see in a church, at the promenade, or in some public ceremony, the person of whom he becomes enamoured; or he must be fatally taken to her abode by a relative or friend, and leave it pensive and melancholy. For some time he conceals his passion from the beloved object, and yet he pays her several visits, during which some love-question is set afloat, which exercises the wits of the persons assembled. The day of the declaration comes; it usually takes place in the alley of some garden, whilst the company is at some little distance; and this declaration of love is followed by our rapid anger, betrayed by blushes, and which for a time banishes the lover from our

presence. He afterwards finds means to appease us, to accustom us gradually to hear him discourse of his passion, and to draw from us that confession which is so painful. After this come the adventures, the rivals who cross a mutual love, the persecutions of fathers, the jealousies conceived on false appearances, the reproaches, the fits of despair, the abductions, and all that follows. Thus things are carried on according to good manners; and these are rules which cannot be dispensed with in true galanterie. But to begin with marriage, to make love when one draws up the settlements, and begin the novel by the very end, is the most tradesmanlike sort of proceeding, and the mere thought of it makes one sick."

All novels may consider themselves attacked in this pitiless speech, and, with novels, ideal love, and the dreams of youth. But it lays bare, and with great truth, the weak side of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's fictions: "to urge the soft, the tender, the impassioned," was a requisite accomplishment in her lovers; to receive a declaration of love with wrath, was what decorum exacted from her heroines. Yet she too had a laugh at "love by rule," at "the morals and politics of love;" and plainly declared that love, as she understood it, was more than mere romance. But who thinks of, who cares for, that now? Madelon's definition of a Scudéry romance alone remains — keen, severe, and merciless.

Had Mademoiselle de Scudéry been a great writer, the immortal magic of style might have saved her; but she was not, and her sins are remembered by the thousands who have never read one line of her writings. Too few know that if she exaggerated refinement, delicacy, and love, she wrote pure books, full of noble, lofty, and heroic sentiments, at a time when the lofty and the heroic were passing away; too few remember that to her, and the women in whose society she lived, and whose praise she sought, we owe the introduction of purity and delicacy in fiction. In decency, refinement, and morality, her great enemy, Molière, might have taken a lesson from her and have been none the less a genius. And had there been then in England a woman like her, one to whom reputation had given weight, and whose power society acknowledged, we think that the literature which flourished under the reign of the second Charles would not have been disgraced by so much shamelessness and profligacy; we think

that some redeeming influence would have flowed from the efforts of one whose boast it still can be, after two hundred years, that more than any other writer of fiction, she helped to make the men of her country courteous and gentle, its women intellectual and refined, and both more pure.

CHAPTER VII.

Madame de La Fayette.

Is a most interesting and in many respects instructive life — if royal birth, undoubted talent, plenty of eccentricity, sorrows, and adventures, and a novel, were claims sufficient for a place between *Mademoiselle de Scudéry* and *Madame de la Fayette*, neither *Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, the *Grande Mademoiselle*, as she was called, nor her *Princess of Paphlagonia*, should be omitted here. But though we must allude to her, in passing, as one of the signs of the times, truth will not allow us to rank her as more. She obeyed the tastes and the feelings of her age — she did not lead them; nay more, her interpretation of either had nothing original or remarkable.

Still, her rank, as a grand-daughter of *Henri IV.*, and *Louis the Fourteenth's* first cousin — her romantic adventures in the wars of the *Fronde*, when with two feminine *aide-de-camps* she commanded a portion of the revolted troops, and her intimacy with such women as *Madame de Sévigné* and *Madame de la Fayette*, and minds so polished as *La Rochefoucauld's*, added to her own imperious turn of mind, gave her an influence which, so far as it extended, was at least significant. She found portraits fashionable, and she made them more so; those portraits, at first only an ingenious amusement, strengthened those habits of analysis and psychological observation which, though portraits have long been out of fashion, have remained one of the characteristics of the French school, and serve to draw so broad a distinction between it and genuinely English works of fiction, where through his deeds we learn to know the man.

With the portraits came maxims, or the habit of giving thought a pointed epigrammatic form, and to these two conversational amusements a great authority on those times and

subjects, M. Victor Cousin, attributes the form, and a good deal of the substance, of three classical works of France's most classic age: "*Les Pensées de Pascal*," "*Les Maximes de la Rochefoucauld*," "*Les Caractères de la Bruyère*."

But if this formidable power of serial and literary rule passed through the hands of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, it neither originated nor ended with her. She found portraits in Mademoiselle de Scudéry's works, and only helped to spread the taste in her circle. She wrote her own portrait, flattered, but true enough; her friends exchanged portraits, as their descendants now exchange photographic cards — the spirit is forsaken for the flesh — and in the published collection of that curious historical record, which is entitled "*Portraits Divers*," we find that of the great portrait-writer, Mademoiselle de Scudéry herself.

To that lady, Mademoiselle de Montpensier owed much, and as much evil as good. She exaggerated her over-refined love, the folly of the age, and in a pleasant correspondence between her and Madame de Motteville, that sensible and shrewd lady had to plead the cause of marriage, which Mademoiselle, not yet the wife of Lauzun, wanted to suppress altogether. Some of her friends went farther. The heroine of her "*Princess of Paphlagonia*" was a Mademoiselle de Vandy, whose scrupulous delicacy was thus recorded: —

"One day a cavalier, as he was relating a story, named love to her. At once she coloured so much, that the company perceived that the cavalier had said something which wounded her modesty. He stopped short, through respect and fear of having offended her. With much presence of mind the Princess resumed the discourse, and wishing not to name love, and to make the cavalier feel that this word may not to be mentioned in her presence," she said, 'Well, and what did the other one do?' And henceforth the 'other one' became the name under which love was known in the conversations held with the Princess."

Twelve years later, this same Mademoiselle de Vandy, faithful to her fastidious delicacy, kindly promised one of her friends, Madame de Scudéry, widow of George de Scudéry, to have her locked up, if ever she was afflicted with this sad malady of love.

If we cannot give any account of Mademoiselle as a writer of fiction, still less can we linger over another novelist of the

day — the profligate and notorious Madame de Villédieu. She was coarse, daring, and had a certain success; but neither as a writer nor as a woman is she worthy of record. Her own life, with her successes as an actress, a tragedian, and a novelist, her marriages with married men, her fits of penitential fervour, her longings for a convent life, and her early death, the result of inveterate intemperance, is a pitiable and sad history. Hers it was to misuse some of life's most precious gifts — beauty, education, and talent, the union of which would bless many a woman's lot. (From her we willingly turn to a very different woman — one of the purest and the most delicate and gifted of her sex, and, beyond doubt, the best novelist of her country and her age.)

To the readers of Madame de Sévigné's delightful letters, the name of Madame de la Fayette must be familiar. Often is she mentioned, and ever tenderly. After a painful parting from Madame de Grignan, that most beloved of daughters, Madame de Sévigné takes her grief to Madame de la Fayette's fireside. She finds her friend alone, ill and saddened by the death of a sister, a nun; in the very mood best suited to share a keen sorrow. M. de la Rochefoucauld drops in; the conversation is all on Madame de Grignan, to whom Madame de Sévigné vividly paints the whole scene in a few words.

Many evenings less sad follow that first evening; but sometimes the scene changes to M. de la Rochefoucauld's house, from which Madame de Sévigné twice dates a letter. Sitting with him and Madame de la Fayette (for they were rarely apart), she learns the tragic death of Vatel, who has just committed suicide at Chantilly, because the fish did not come in; and she immediately tells, as she alone knew how to tell, the story to her daughter.

Sometimes the meeting is at Madame de Sévigné's temporary abode, the convent of Sainte Marie. The beautiful Madame Defresnoi has been there to supper, but is gone; and Madame de la Fayette and Madame Scarron sit in judgment on her beauty, and pronounce it vastly below Madame de Grignan's; and Madame de Sévigné has not the heart to be modest, but listens delighted; as faithfully she reports to her daughter the affection of Madame de la Fayette. "She loves you tenderly," she once writes; "she makes no difficulty of giving you up the first place with me, because of your perfections, and when she is gentle she says she does

not do so without pain; but it is fixed and settled, and this justice renders her worthy of the second place which she has."

And thus the letters go on, giving us little familiar words of praise, allusions of which the meaning is lost, and glimpses of a friendly familiarity, both significant and suggestive. Sometimes it is the maxims of La Rochefoucauld which Madame de Sévigné sends to her daughter — these famous maxims, of which, had she not come across his life so late, Madame de la Fayette would have softened the bitterness. Sometimes it is a new fable of La Fontaine's which the friends have been discussing, and which Madame de Sévigné quotes *en passant*; or a new play of Molière's, rare treat, to be read at the Duke's Hôtel, and of which she gives up the hearing to write to Madame de Grignan. Sometimes it is illness that prostrates Madame de la Fayette, or sorrow and death that enter the Duke's abode; his youngest son has been killed crossing the Rhine, as well as the Duke of Longueville, son of the woman he once fondly loved. Then comes, at length, the inevitable end: the Duke is dead. Some years later there is another record: Madame de la Fayette is gone; her name drops from the lively letters, and three years afterwards they close with the death of Madame de Sévigné herself.

That Madame de Sévigné loved and valued Madame de la Fayette, is certain: but if all we know of this lady were to be found in the world-read epistles of the former, (we should scarcely suspect that the fastidious Boileau, quoting one of her sayings, declared that Madame de la Fayette wrote best, and had most *esprit* of any woman in France.) Such praise from the pitiless derider of Mademoiselle de Scudéry would of itself rescue Madame de la Fayette from oblivion, could it overtake the author of the "Princesse de Clèves."

Subdued and sad she is painted by Madame de Sévigné, and such she too often was. She used to say sometimes, "It is enough to be;" but it was the languor of ill-health that made her thus belie a mind full of penetration and power, and a rare combination of many choice gifts. (According to all accounts, Madame de la Fayette was a charming woman, of pleasing aspect, and of more pleasing manners. Her portraits show that she possessed, with beauty, a sweet and open countenance. Her judgment, her sincerity, and the delicacy of her wit were proverbial in her own times. Her prudence and her virtue were never doubted, even though at thirty-two she

began, with the too famous La Rochefoucauld, that life-long connexion, too calm for love, but more tender than common friendship, which has remained as a rare and touching example of man's and woman's affection. To posterity she is known as the writer of a few agreeable letters addressed to Madame de Sévigné, and as the author of some charming memoirs, and more charming tales.

✓ Marie Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne was born in the year 1633. Her father, Aymar de la Vergne, was Governor of the Hâvre de Grâce. Her mother, Marie de Péna, belonged to an ancient Provençal family, renowned in the poetic annals of that land of song. Marie de la Vergne was more carefully educated than most young girls, even of the wealthy and aristocratic class, in those days. Her father was learned, and gave her two learned teachers, Ménage and Father Rapin, who taught her Latin.

Ménage was one of the first scholars of his day. He had already given a polite and classical instruction to Mademoiselle de Rabutin Chantal, the grand-daughter of a holy woman, celebrated in the annals of charity, and who, being Mademoiselle de la Vergne's elder by ten years, was already known to the world as the young and beautiful Madame de Sévigné. Mademoiselle de la Vergne's proficiency in her new study was rapid. She had been learning Latin three months, when Ménage and Father Rapin disagreed about the real meaning of a passage in one of the classic poets. She heard them with impatience, and at length exclaimed, "You know nothing about it either of you — the real meaning is this," and she explained the passage forthwith.

Was Ménage smitten with this precocity, or was what followed the result of Mademoiselle de la Vergne's charms, for she was very pretty? It is hard to say. Ménage was rather given to fall in love with his fair scholars, and in love he accordingly fell with this young lady, who made little of his adoration. He wrote verses in her honour, Latin verses, in which he unluckily called her by the euphonious, but not pleasing, name of Laverna; a name that drew down some bitter and sarcastic comments on this noted plagiarist, who thus seemed to place himself under the patronage of the classical goddess of dishonesty.

His Latin and his Laverna availed him nought with the prudent Marie. De Retz himself, who saw her when he was

a prisoner in Nantes, confesses that she was very pretty, very amiable, but that, though she fascinated him, she treated him with great rigour. And he coolly attributes his want of success to the judicious warnings Mademoiselle de la Vergne had received from her mother and her second husband, the Chevalier de Sévigné.

In the year 1655, being then twenty-two, Mademoiselle de la Vergne was married to the Marquis de la Fayette, of whom we know nothing, save that his wife gave him two sons; the elder one was a military man, and the ancestor of a La Fayette whose name will remain in the annals of the American war and of the French Revolution. The younger son was an abbé, who carelessly lent and lost his mother's manuscripts.

By her marriage, Madame de la Fayette found herself the sister-in-law of the beautiful and virtuous Mademoiselle de la Fayette, for whom Louis XIII. cherished so platonic a passion. This lady left the court early, became a nun, and retired to the convent of Chaillot, of which she was made Superior. In visiting Mother Angélique in that calm retreat, Madame de la Fayette became known to the widowed queen of Charles the First, Henrietta Maria, and to her daughter, that young and lovely princess who afterwards married the brother of Louis XIV. Madame de la Fayette's serious grace pleased the lively girl, and when she became Duchess of Orléans, her friend of Chaillot was one of her chief favourites. Madame de la Fayette was then known as an author; in 1660, she published a short tale, entitled "Madame de Montpensier," which, though she did not acknowledge it, gave her a rank in literature. "You write well," said Madame to her one day, "write, and I will give you materials for good memoirs." Madame de la Fayette complied, and has left an interesting account of her royal friend, and of her gay little court. In her preface to that narrative, she acknowledges that it was, now and then, very difficult to tell the truth, so as to make it be known, and yet not offend or displease the Princess.

The memoirs were short; shorter than Madame thought they would be when her favourite began them. Henrietta of England died in the flower of her years, carried off by a sudden and mysterious disease, many said by poison. She died in the arms of Madame de la Fayette, who has left a touching account of that ill-fated lady's last hours. She could never remember her without sorrow, and was always affectionately

loved by Madame's children. One, the wife of the Duke of Savoy, never forgot her mother's faithful friend. That remembrance, according to Madame de Sévigné, once took the substantial shape of a hundred yards of magnificent velvet, a hundred yards of satin to line it, and the portrait of the Duchess encircled with diamonds.

We must look for no events in Madame de la Fayette's life. She is known by her friends and her books — neither of them numerous, but both significant. A candid mind and a judicious intellect were considered her *grand* characteristics. Madame de Sévigné praised "her divine reason." Ségrais told her that her judgment was superior to her wit. Her sincerity and the elegant conciseness of her language were proverbial. It was one of her literary axioms that every period struck out was worth a Louis-d'or, and every word twenty sous. Madame Scarron paid her a most graceful compliment in one of her letters. Speaking of the manner in which she had told her story, as a suppliant, to Madame de Montespan, she added, "In short, Madame de la Fayette would have approved the sincerity of my language, and the brevity of my narrative."

Yet these two accomplished women, both so remarkable for judgment, correct taste, and prudence, could not remain friends when the widow Scarron had become Madame de Maintenon, friend, then wife of the sovereign. "I have not been able," said Madame de Maintenon, "to keep Madame de la Fayette's friendship. The price she attached to its continuance was too high. I have at least shown her that I was as true and as firm as herself."

Madame de la Fayette's remembrance of her former friend was neither so kind nor so courteous. In some memoirs which she wrote on the Court of France, she mentioned Racine's "Tragedy of Esther;" every one knew and knows for whom the Jewish Queen stood. Madame de la Fayette observed ironically that the real Esther "was somewhat younger, and less *précieuse* in her piety, than Madame de Maintenon." Why two women, whose friendship and intimacy might have been so delightful, quarrelled, is not known now, and matters little. Perhaps Madame de la Fayette was too sincere. The same spirit of candour that would not let her conceal her age, rendered her inexorably true with others, and truth is rarely welcome at Courts.

In reality she had but two friends, Madame de Sévigné and the Duke of La Rochefoucauld: to him she devoted the best part of her life; but to her, a little before her end, Madame de la Fayette addressed those sad and tender words: "Believe, dearest, you are the being I have most loved in this world."

Both were still young, and members of the accomplished though declining Rambouillet circle, when Madame de la Fayette tried her hand on one of the written portraits then fashionable. She drew Madame de Sévigné in all the bloom of her joyous beauty, and in all the first delightful freshness of her charming mind. This portrait, the work of a faithful and loving hand, and a few pretty and affectionate letters, have both been preserved with Madame de la Fayette's works; a memorial of the friendship which once bound two of the most charming, though most different, women of their age.

Madame de Sévigné was gay, joyous, witty, ardent, and happy. Madame de la Fayette was mild, subdued, and somewhat sad. Her friends called her the mist, even as they called the sweet, insinuating Madame Scarron the thaw, and the severe Colbert the north. But if constitutional seriousness and weak health prematurely clouded her life, if Madame de la Fayette was more calm and less brilliant than her happier friend, she had a tenderness tempered by strong principle, and its companion good sense, that gave her a peculiar charm. She was naturally candid, and sincerity, which is rarely the quality of the amiable, might have made her severe, if years of ill-health, that rendered her slightly indolent, had not given her a languid grace that suited a well-born, well-bred lady of the world, with no particular business to attend to. *6 weeks*

The trouble of writing letters was especially distasteful to Madame de la Fayette. Madame de Sévigné, herself so good a correspondent, complained, and her friend prettily answered, "If I had a lover, who wanted letters of mine every morning, I should fall out with him, for I could not write." She praised and admired Madame de Sévigné's epistolary facility, but neither could nor would imitate it. Her failing health supplied her with plenty of excuses, and Madame de Sévigné, happy, joyous, and strong, full of health and gaiety, gently satirized her valetudinary friend in writing to her daughter. "Madame de la Fayette is going to-morrow to a little house near Meudon, where she has already been. She will spend a fortnight there, to be as it were suspended between heaven and earth."

She does not want to think, nor to talk, nor to answer, nor to listen. She is tired of saying good morning and good evening. She has fever every day, and rest cures her — rest therefore she requires. I shall sometimes go and see her.

"M. de la Rochefoucauld is in the chair you know; his sadness is incredible, and it is easy to guess what ails him." It was, indeed, to those who knew in what tender and happy intimacy he lived with Madame de la Fayette. She was about thirty-two, and he more than fifty, when their long friendship began. Both were melancholy and disappointed. He in man's ambition, she in woman's tenderness. Under the name of Marsillac, M. de la Rochefoucauld had acted a brilliant and active part in the wars of the Fronde. He had had adventure, peril, and success in love and war. His it had been to charm the proud and wayward heart of the divine Mandane herself, an episode which Mademoiselle de Scudéry prudently omitted in her idealization of Madame de Longueville. But the pride of seducing the loveliest woman of her day, a Princess of the royal blood of France by birth, member of another princely house by marriage, had been more potent than true love in his heart. In hers the romance of stirring adventure, the illusions of vanity, the wish of being adored, had, far more than passion, silenced the voice of honour. She woke from her dream of ambition and error, to lead a life of austere penitence and retirement; he woke from his to become more and more worldly; to deride passions he had ceased to feel, and write his famous maxims.

Different, indeed, had been Madame de la Fayette's destiny. She was still a child when young M. de Marsillac and Madame de Longueville were in the heyday of their loves; but if the storm of forbidden feelings which wasted and sullied their lives did not come near her, not the less trying and sad were days which happiness never seems to have visited.

Negative felicity may be the best and safest lot; the absence of great and heavy sorrows may to many seem enviable; but how can tenderness and imagination fare on such meagre cheer? Madame de la Fayette had both — she had beauty, too; it was well for her that judgment and virtue guarded her youth; for her married life seems to have been cold and cheerless. It is not said that her husband was unkind; what sort of a man he was — good, accomplished, or foolish — appears in no cotemporary record. He probably was little or

nothing to his wife; her children left her early, as was then the custom; she was rich and had nothing to do; she was delicate, and not fond of pleasure; at thirty-two, after being married ten years, she thought herself old. She felt old, probably, old in the feelings of a life without happiness or aim.

Her three tales, "Madame de Montpensier," "The Princesse de Clèves," and "Madame de Tende," tell but one story, which in its main features is her own; the struggle between duty and passion in the heart of a virtuous woman, united to a man whom she cannot love. We do not think that Madame de la Fayette went so far as passion; but she had to strive against indifference and *ennui*, a weary load to bear in married life. Too sensitive not to feel this strange void; too virtuous and too wise to indulge herself in forbidden affections, Madame de la Fayette turned to friendship.

It has been the happy lot of Frenchwomen to experience and receive in its fulness that gentlest feeling of the human heart. No friends have been so universally faithful and true, and none have been more beloved. If we read the social and literary history of France during the last two hundred years, we shall find more instances of the tender and enduring affection of women than can be the boast of any other nation during the same space of time. The profligate, the good, the intellectual, the ignorant, have felt it alike. It has been calm, polite, and amiable in polished times, heroic and devoted in evil days. Wherever we see a distinguished man, a literary circle, a persecution from the days of Montaigne down to those of Madame Roland, there we also see a woman's friendship shining pure and clear.

Friendship was the great passion of Madame de Rambouillet. The embellishments of her noble mansion, the enjoyments of her pure and intellectual life, were for her friends even more than for herself. Tender and almost childish instances of her desire to please them have been freely given by her biographers. What friendship there was even in the austere Port Royal, where men and women studied, and lived, it seemed, but for eternity! How pure and true was the long affection of Mademoiselle de Scudéry and Pélisson! — scarcely love, though the fashion of the age made them call it such. But we may doubt if love begins near fifty and lives beyond the eightieth year of man and woman; and to return to Madame de la Fayette, how faithful and tender was the

long intimacy between her and the cynical author of the maxims! She had the wisdom and the mild gravity of years, without their aspect or their coldness; and he, a wearied man, but with more imagination and warmth than he shewed, found in her all he could still care for in woman — sweetness and repose.

Well he might miss his faithful companion when she left him even but for a few days. Was it not she who had charmed away the bitterness of his philosophy? — who had filled his daily life with calm pleasures? — who, growing active and energetic for him, had, by her unwearied exertions and her sagacity, so materially helped him in some troublesome lawsuits that she had preserved a large portion of his household property to him and his? If Madame de Sévigné was the dearest friend, he was the most favoured, for he needed friendship most. Madame de Sévigné had her daughter to write to, her friends to see; M. de la Rochefoucauld's sons were away; he was infirm, and lived in the solitude of wealth and high rank without love. Madame de la Fayette, though infirm herself, found health and leisure enough to soothe his declining years, and, spite his sourness, he found kindness and tender affection for her.

Both needed that tie. Madame de la Fayette's melancholy is rather a matter of conjecture than of knowledge; but La Rochefoucauld has recorded his in a work famous for the bitterness of its philosophy, and the exquisite elegance of its language. The maxims are world-known, but they were a slander on their author no less than on human nature. His mind was cynical, but his heart was not a cold heart. He who wrote that love was like spirits, talked of by all, seen by none — had given up his youth to the worship of a lovely woman. He who based all human friendship on sordid calculation, was in the decline of life dependent, and glad to be so, on the gentle and disinterested friendship of Madame de la Fayette.

They met at the very time for friendship, when both had seen the vanity of life's fairest promises, when for both was passed the time of hope and fruition, when nought remained save friendship to their late autumn. The once brilliant adventurer of the Fronde had become a sad and infirm man. In Madame de la Fayette he found a grave and gentle mind, and a sincerity which he characterized by an expression not known before he used it, and which has remained in the French lan-

guage. He did not say that she was truthful, but that she was true — “elle est vraie.” The two friends soon lived in an entire communion of mind and feeling.

Madame de la Fayette said to Ségrais: “He has improved my mind, but I have improved his heart.” There was more modesty than truth in the saying; Madame de la Fayette’s mind was already polished and perfect when her friendship for La Rochefoucauld began; but he helped her to revise, and his advice contributed to render more perfect that most perfect of her tales, the “*Princesse de Clèves*.”

In this beautiful story Madame de la Fayette painted that love which she had never felt, and which her friend — had the difference in their years allowed them to meet in youth — might so easily have inspired. But would he have returned it? We think not. Madame de Longueville, a princess, a beauty, a heroine in her daring, would still have charmed his imagination and kept him at her feet; the grave, judicious, and pleasing Marie de la Vergne’s calm and sedate grace would never have moved young M. de Marsillac’s heart.

Friendship did not so far absorb Madame de la Fayette that she had not time for the literary pursuits she had always loved. “*Zayde*” was published in 1670, the year of Madame’s death. Madame de la Fayette was assisted in this story by her friend and protégé, Ségrais. Her house had long been open to men of letters, and La Fontaine, for whom women did so much, is conjectured to have owed her some of those substantial benefits his improvidence rendered necessary. Ségrais was a distinguished man of letters, who had long been in Mademoiselle’s favour.

This illustrious lady, though by no means deficient in talent, was one of the many clever women of those days to whom grammar and spelling were what the abstruse sciences are to the women of our own times. Ségrais corrected her works, and was made generally useful, until he ventured to oppose the most ill-advised act of his eccentric mistress, her marriage with Lauzun. Her displeasure then compelled him to leave her house; Madame de la Fayette received him in hers, and he assisted her in the construction of “*Zayde*,” which even appeared under his name. This tale was also submitted during its progress to the learned Huet, afterwards Bishop of Avranches, who prefixed to it his treatise on the origin of romances, addressed in the shape of a letter to

Ségrais. Madame de la Fayette used to say to him, "We have married our children."

The success of "Zayde" was great, but it did not equal that of the "Princesse de Clèves," in which Ségrais is also said to have guided Madame de la Fayette. We think, however, that in this her masterpiece she owed little to Ségrais, but much to the contact of the delicate and powerful mind with which for some years her own had been in daily communion.

It was published in 1678. Its success was wonderful. When people met in the main avenue of the Tuileries it was to speak of the new novel. Fontenelle read it four times; Boursault wrote on the subject a tragedy, which was doubly unlucky, for it was not merely hissed, but it made Corneille and Racine quarrel. The former having gone so far as to say that it only required Racine's name to be a perfect production, Racine, offended, answered so sharply, that all friendship was henceforth at an end between the two great tragic poets.

Two years after this splendid success, Madame de la Fayette lost her friend, M. de la Rochefoucauld.

"Nothing," writes Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, "could be compared to the charm and trust of their friendship."

Madame de la Fayette survived her friend thirteen years. She had long been religious, but austere piety marked the decline of her life. The Abbé Duguet, one of the Port-Royal writers, was her confessor, or, to speak more correctly, her spiritual adviser. He seems to have taught her that hard though sublime lesson which it behoves all Christians to learn, submission to the Divine will. Sorrow, sickness, and sufferings almost intolerable found her calm and resigned, until, in the sixtieth year of her age, she gave up her soul to God.

CHAPTER VIII

"Zayda."

It is a great and rare privilege to be the first in any style of composition which the taste of future ages shall ratify; to stand at the head of a long line of noble descendants, who, let them boast as they will, must needs confess their progenitor in you. But it is a privilege which must be dearly bought. To be first is to act without experience or guide; it is to open the way to lovely regions others shall enjoy; it is to fall into errors as palpable as day, and miss truths and beauties as shining and as clear.

Such has been Madame de la Fayette's fate. Without models to enlighten, though with many to mislead her, she founded a new school of fiction, the most delicate, the most womanlike and refined; that which can fashion a tale out of slight incidents and strong feelings. Not a love-story has been written since the "*Princesse de Clèves*," from the publication of that tale itself down to our own days, but is its offspring, and has felt its influence directly or indirectly. Many, indeed, who write have never read it, and many more never will, though it is a French classic; but when it appeared in 1678 it was at once proclaimed a model, followed and imitated — and, above all, felt to be such in every language: and we need not say that in the seventeenth century the only novels universally admired and popular were those of French writers.

La Calprenède, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de la Fayette, ruled the reading public in those days. Of the three the last alone has survived. She has been surpassed in her own line. Others have painted with more power, though not with more truth, the sorrows of passion; imagination more fervent than she owned, a style more vigorous — though not purer or more elegant than hers — invention, incident, to which she could lay no claim, have been among the privileges of her successors. But she came first; first she felt and saw that judgment and truth were requisite in fiction — that simplicity had a matchless charm — that there was a mine of rich ore in gentle feelings, before her either unheeded or imperfectly painted. And yet, though reflection and compari-

son convince us of her infinite merit, it is not in our power to feel it in its fulness. We have the fruit, and more than the fruit, of the reform she effected. Many a wonderful tale of passion, love, and woe have we read before hers; it often comes last in our experience, and reads coldest. We require to go back two hundred years; to wade through endless romances; to admire the "*Astrea*," a pastoral; to be transported with the "*Great Cyrus*," a romance; to think "*Cleopatra*" a noble book; and with our minds still full of that admiration for much that is excellent, and infinitely more that is exaggerated, strange, and foolish, to take up a short and faultless tale. Its matter is simple, its manner natural; its feelings are such as every man and woman can feel; neither shepherds nor heroes, neither great feats of arms nor marvellous escapes and adventures, shall we find there; nothing but what we see daily, what we can all understand and sympathize with.

M. de Clèves is a noble gentleman, a fond yet not weak husband, such a man as the court of France can yield in these its palmy days. The Princess is lovely, virtuous, and unhappy; no exaggerated modesty, no *précieuse* theory interfere between her and her feelings; duty, sad, gentle, and yet austere, the duty of a pure Christian woman, who has, perhaps, listened to Bossuet, or been the friend of Pascal, is sufficient to warn and save her. As for the lover, M. de Nemours, he is the pink and flower of enamoured cavaliers; his passion is strong and natural — it is man's passion for what he desires, and the object of his wishes is unfortunately married. He is no seducer, for she will not let him be one: but, courteous and tender though he seems, we feel that Madame de Clèves does well not to trust him; he is no Cyrus, no Arontius, no marvellous embodiment of the pure chivalry of the olden times; he is what M. de la Rochefoucauld was when he was young and Madame de Longueville beautiful — a vehement and impassioned lover.

These are the materials of the story, and it is the first of its kind that we read. The first in which our sympathies are not called forth by impossible characters, virtues, and events; but find themselves enlisted by people whom we know, by feelings we could experience, by temptations we could go through and overcome. It is, indeed, the revelation of a new world. The shoals, the tempests of seas more fatal than any in which

Mandane or Clelia ever sailed, lie before us. We see lurking, in the safest and most guarded homes, perils which these lofty heroines, so often carried off by Princes and Kings, and as often safely recovered by heroic lovers, never suspected in all their wanderings; for they are the perils of our own weakness and our own hearts; the dangers of youth, of love, of beauty, of all that can charm man and woman away from the cold and narrow path of duty. No wonder that we are surprised and enchanted, no wonder that M. de Fontenelle reads this book four times, no wonder that when we meet our friends in the Tuileries we stop them to ask, "Have you read it?" No wonder that all who know the signs of the times proclaim the heroic ten volume romance conquered, and hail the advent of a new and immortal school—the school of truth, feelingly and delicately told.

This is what we feel in the seventeenth century; it is what posterity knows, acknowledges, and proclaims, but, alas! never can feel. For to be first is not to be unsurpassed; and to use Madame de la Fayette with that sincerity which she prized and practised, we must confess it was not the power of her genius made her discover the new and lovely paths she was the first to tread. Genius she had of the most delicate and refined kind, but it was not that that showed her the way, it was her perfect judgment, "her divine reason." Her power of excellence was limited; but had she only written the "Princesse de Clèves," we should say that she could not do wrong. Her first tale, "Madame de Montpensier," a slight sketch, and her second, "Zayde," a novel of some length, prove, with all their merit, that her third and most perfect work was the fruit of thought and experience, even more than of inspiration. She availed herself of all the qualities of her predecessors, and of her own as well, and shunned their errors, and those into which she had herself been led. Bad taste lost Mademoiselle de Scudéry, with all her talent; good taste saved Madame de la Fayette, spite some deficiencies, we cannot say defects, and gave her a fixed and exalted place in French literature.

To the good fortune of coming first, Madame de la Fayette added that of writing when French was in all its elegance and purity, and when the spoken language of well-bred people was the very best style in which simple narrative could be written. Since then the prose of speech and that of writing have been

more or less at variance in France. Written prose has often been too poetic, and spoken prose too trite; then, however, was the happy union of simplicity and elegance; what has since been the ambition of genius, was the happy gift of a chosen circle. Some surpassed others, planets midst those bright stars; but all that were not actual fools — for these there is no redemption — had a light of their own, steady and clear. Madame de la Fayette had more than her share, and this was the first feature that made "Zayde" attractive. The style of "La Calprenède" was pitiable; that of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, though often graceful, was always careless and loose. Madame de la Fayette wrote as she spoke, with clearness, elegance, and precision. In graceful language she told a love-story; the truth and delicacy of the sentiments portrayed, the many charming thoughts scattered throughout its easy pages, fascinated the readers of "Zayde." Here was a contrast, indeed, to the ten volumes of "Clelia," and to the map of the kingdom of Tenderness. Yet of that difference neither Huet, who wrote a letter prefixed to "Zayde," and addressed to Ségrais, its reputed author, nor yet the public, seemed aware. Huet, in that letter, indulges in all his fervent admiration for Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and he does not seem to know that he has introduced to the public a fatal rival, the founder of a new school, by which the old one shall be overthrown for evermore.

The difference between "Zayde" and its predecessors was not yet very striking. It has been reprinted so late as 1825, but it is not a tale for all times; we believe it has passed through its last edition, and may now be considered a dead novel. It is impossible to read it without admiring the charming mind that would analyse so subtly and so well some of the most mysterious emotions of the human heart; but the tale itself has lost its power to attract and to please. The construction of the story is defective. The narrative is interrupted by episodes, and what was a relief in "Clelia" or "Cyrus" is here a fault. People step in and tell us what happened to them, when they and their fortunes concern us least. The incidents, unless when courts and their intrigues are painted with the truth of close observation, are not probable, or have not the art of seeming such. The lovers refine so exquisitely that we forget their sorrows and our pity. Historical truth is disregarded; but that is a trifle, the greater truth

of human passions is not more respected, when it interferes with love, than in *Mademoiselle de Scudéry* herself.

Consalvo the Great, the terror of the Moors, is in the field. To deliver Spain and to hunt down the Moslem might be the chief thoughts of the Castilian warrior — might be, but are not. He thinks but of one thing: Does Zayde love him, or does she love Alamir? Well, after all, this is natural in him, and though we may wish that this love-sick general waited for more peaceable times to betray this anxiety, still we pardon him — he is in love. But that his brother-in-law, the Spanish king, should be tormented with the same curiosity, and that, too, when he is still out of breath, as it were, with a most sanguinary contest between two antagonistic races — that his majesty should spare no pains to know the truth, namely, whether Zayde loves Alamir or not — that he should send his friend Don Olmond to Zayde's friend Felime for no other purpose than to worm out of her this delicate secret, is what is true of no time. It was not true of the heroic days of Spanish chivalry, nor even of the polite days of Louis XIV. Condé and Turenne might get distracted about their own loves; we doubt whether the loves of their dearest friends agitated them much. There is this marvellous feature in love: that, whilst it is infinitely important to the person concerned, to lookers-on it seems little better than a fevered dream. They who love move in a world that is both enchanted and splendid, and they weary not to talk of its delights; they who look on see nothing but a barren waste — hear nothing save idle words, that sound to them as the merest ravings of deluded hearts.

The story of "Zayde" is romantic, and is constructed on the model of the old Italian and Spanish novellas. The Count of Castile has two children, a son and a daughter, both of perfect beauty. Such pride does the Count take in his children, that wherever he goes, even in his excursion against the Moors, the portraits of his son and daughter go with him. Consalvo he sends to court. The young man becomes the favourite of Dom Garcia, the king's eldest son, whose life he has saved in an encounter against the Moors. To this young and ambitious prince, Consalvo recommends his own friend Dom Ramire, and friendship, seemingly fast and firm, soon binds the three. They get one day to talk about love, and their discourse would not misbecome *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's*

pages. Like her predecessor, Madame de la Fayette had heard such arguments again and again at the Hôtel Rambouillet, and like her she thought this polite controversy suited to the pages of romance. The Prince and Dom Ramire have been reproaching Consalvo with his coldness, and they tax him with his want of a passion as with a serious fault. He accuses them of not knowing what real love is.

"You do not love your mistresses," he says; "you will never persuade me that you are in love with a person whose face you scarcely know, and whom you would not recognize if you did not see her at the window where you are in the habit of looking at her."

"You exaggerate the little knowledge we have of our mistresses," replies the Prince. "We know their beauty, and that is the chief thing in love; of their wit we judge by their countenance, and afterwards by their letters, and when we come to see them nearer we are charmed to discover that which we did not already know. All they say has the grace of novelty. Their manner is a surprise, and that surprise increases and rouses love; whereas they who know their mistresses before they love them, are so much accustomed to their wit and beauty that they no longer feel the charm of both when they are beloved."

This theory of love is subtle and ingenious; nevertheless, Consalvo resists it.

"I leave you free to love a lady without knowing her," he says to Dom Garcia; "but allow me, my lord, to love none save a person whom I shall know enough to esteem her, and to be assured that I shall find happiness with her when she loves me. I must also confess that I should like her to have no previous attachment."

"And I," interrupts Dom Ramire — "I should find more pleasure in becoming master of a heart already guarded by a passion than in moving one that had never been moved: this would be a double victory. I should also feel more convinced of the feelings I had inspired if I had watched them growing through the affection felt for another man; in short, both my pride and my love would be gratified in carrying off a mistress from a rival."

"Consalvo is so much surprised at this opinion," says the Prince, "and he thinks so poorly of it, that he will not even answer it."

The three persist in their opinions. The prince will have none but love at first sight, and will not call a true passion that which comes with time. Nugna Bella is the most beautiful lady at court, but he cannot love her, because he has known her all his life. Dom Ramire is indifferent to her, because her heart being free he could not enjoy the exquisite gratification of supplanting a rival; and Consalvo, though he admires her beauty, does not know enough of her for love. This objection the Prince kindly removes by throwing him so much in the lady's way that a strong and mutual attachment is the result; political reasons, however, forbid their immediate union, and keep their love a secret.

Consalvo's sister comes to court. Her beauty dazzles the Prince, and takes him, as he likes to be taken, by surprise. He hides this feeling from Consalvo, and makes Dom Ramire his confidant. Dom Ramire, to reach his friend's sister, must apply to Nugna Bella, who keeps close watch over her. With infinite art, step by step, he brings this lady round to the prince's views, and finding her provided with the attraction in which she failed before — love for another — he becomes inflamed, spares no pains to supplant his friend, and succeeds.

The whole of this little court intrigue is told with exquisite truth and tact; it reads like a record of actual facts, which perhaps it is. The indignation of Consalvo may be imagined. On one day he learns that he has lost the Prince's friendship, the love of his mistress, and the truth of Ramire. Disgusted with life, he leaves the court, assumes the name of Theodoric, undergoes various adventures, and reaches Tarragona, whence he means to sail for Greece. At Tarragona he meets with a gentleman named Alfonso, like him, sick of the world, and with whom, altering his original intention, he agrees to remain.

Alfonso's sorrows have all been of his own seeking; when Consalvo complains of the treachery of friends, Alfonso laments that he has not been true to himself, and there is deep and bitter truth in his reply to the young man's repinings.

"You fly from persons who have betrayed you," he says to his guest; "but judge what your torment would be if you were compelled to live for ever with the very one that has caused all your sorrow — this is my fate."

French Women of Letters.

Alfonso's story, which he relates later in the book, does not belie his words.

Disgusted with the inconstancy of women, Alfonso had resolved to love no more, and, at all events, to marry none but a plain woman, seemingly concluding that there cannot be love without beauty. "After having suffered so much from jealousy," he says to Consalvo, "I did not want to run the risk of feeling the jealousy of a lover as well as that of a husband." His father wishes him to marry Belasire, one of the most beautiful, accomplished, and virtuous ladies at court, but he objects to her — she is too handsome; he says so to Belasire herself. She receives this strange speech with great good-humour. She cannot but sympathise with Alfonso's feelings, for she is so fastidious in the choice of a lover that there is every chance of her dying single. They become friends. Alfonso presses her to tell him the causes of an obduracy which, considering the rank and number of her suitors, has amazed the whole court. Belasire frankly replies:

"I am born with an aversion to marriage. Its bonds always seemed to me very harsh and strict, and I thought that passion only could blind me enough to make me overlook the reasons that oppose this severe tie. You will not marry for love," she added, "and I cannot understand how one can marry without love — without violent love; so far am I from having ever had a passion, that I have not even had a slight fancy for any man; and if I have not married, it is because I have not loved."

This proud, yet not cold heart, united to the attractions of youth, beauty, and daily intercourse, subdues Alfonso's resolves. He falls desperately in love with Belasire, who ends by returning his passion; their marriage is agreed on, but unfortunately delayed.

Alfonso is an ingenious self-tormentor: he is versed, too, in all the metaphysics of love, and though his love and esteem for his beautiful mistress are unbounded, he contrives to make her wretched. The Count of Lare had loved her several years, and loved her till his death: Alfonso wants to know all about that love. Belasire answers him with great candour. From her replies, Alfonso gathers that she had some pity for this unfortunate count. His conclusions are rapid — pity is akin to love; Belasire has deceived him, she loved the Count of Lare, and he, Alfonso, is a miserable man. In vain Belasire

justifies herself, Alfonso believes her whilst she speaks; in her absence his doubts return. He can think, and, what is worse, he can speak of nothing save the Count of Lare. He is in despair to remind his mistress of that dead lover, and yet he must ever do so. It is a labyrinth from which he cannot get out; he is wretched to talk to Belasire of the man he wants her to forget, and he is equally wretched not to talk of him.

In her displeasure at this unreasonable jealousy of a dead man, Belasire threatens to cure him by making him jealous of a living one. Straightway, Alfonso imagines that she and his best friend, Dom Manrique, are in a league to deceive him. The Count of Lare may now sleep quietly in his grave, Manrique will answer Alfonso's purpose. After a long and bitter struggle against her feelings, the lady has the good sense to give up this unreasonable lover. Their marriage is broken off, but Alfonso is not cured; he is convinced that Manrique is his favoured rival, and finding him one night under Belasire's window, he kills him. The unhappy lady will not remain in the world after an event that may leave a stain on her name: she retires to a convent, and Alfonso, having lost his mistress, and killed his friend, goes to Tarragona, and lives there, a sad and miserable man, until Consalvo joins him.

This little episode is very carefully developed. Its delicate details betray that subtle knowledge of the human heart, and of the windings of human passions, in which Madame de la Fayette excelled. We read and believe every word; and well we may — it was true in all its main features, and Alfonso's extravagant jealousy was rather softened than exaggerated.

In the society of this melancholy man Consalvo spends some time. Early on one autumn morning, after there has been a heavy storm in the night, he goes and walks on the seashore. By the light of the rising sun he sees on the beach the wreck of a boat that had been dashed to pieces, and the senseless form of a young and lovely lady, magnificently attired. Whilst he is still marvelling at her beauty, Alfonso joins him, and helps him to carry her into the house. Women are sent for, and, thanks to their care, the lovely stranger revived and spoke, but in an unknown tongue. In vain she is addressed in Spanish, in Italian, in Arabic — she cannot understand, nor make herself be understood. Another lady wrecked the same night, and whom some poor cottagers had picked up, labours under the same misfortune. The two beautiful strangers talk

together. Consalvo gathers from their discourse that the first is called Zayde and the second Felime, also that they are anxious to go to Tunis, but he knows no more.

Alfonso is cured of love for ever, but Consalvo is not. He falls desperately in love with the beautiful Zayde, and he learns his passion from the feelings with which he sees her weep as she gazes on the sea. He is convinced that her tears flow for a lost lover, and he is jealous and wretched almost before he knows that he loves. She looks at him, too, and evidently traces in his features some likeness, which she seems to point out to Felime. Here is another source of torment. Consalvo feels himself no better than the portrait of his dead rival. When she gazes on him she sees another; he cannot appear before her without perpetually reminding her of one whom he would wish her to forget for ever.

And this strange passion for a woman of whom he knows nothing — whose speech he cannot understand; for a woman who will soon leave him, and whom he will never see again — is yet so deep, so potent, that he cannot for a moment resist it.

"Ah, Dom Garcia," he exclaims, "you spoke truly; there are no passions but those that strike us from the first and take us by surprise. The others are but connexions, in which we voluntarily yield our heart. True passions take it from us, and the love I have for Zayde is a torrent that bears me away, nor leaves me the power to withstand it."

The love of Consalvo for the dark-eyed Zayde is charmingly told, but the incidents bear the stamp of a bygone taste. Zayde makes a bracelet from her own beautiful hair; she loses it — it is found by Consalvo, who clasps it with jewels, and keeps it. Unluckily, whilst he is walking by the sea, worshipping this treasure, Zayde comes on him suddenly, and picks up the bracelet, which, in his surprise, he has dropped. She very properly keeps the hair and returns the jewels, and of course Consalvo carelessly casts these into the sea. The incident takes place by the sea-shore, that he may do so, and give his mistress that proof of chivalrous love. She does not seem displeased, yet his jealousy, which gives him no truce, makes him hit on the following ingenious plan of learning the truth.

Alfonso is not so melancholy but that he employs an artist to decorate a gallery of his house with pictures. One of these

paintings, a sea scene and a wreck, strikes Consalvo. He requests the painter to represent a young girl bending over the dead body of her lover; and when the request is complied with, he takes Zayde, whose name he has written beneath the girl's figure, to look at this work of art. Zayde, who it seems can read her own name, is very angry indeed, and, taking up a brush, effaces the dead lover. Consalvo is somewhat comforted.

To comfort succeeds hope: a letter which he finds Zayde writing in the Greek character gives him a clue which he eagerly follows up. He goes to the neighbouring town, finds a Greek merchant, and hastens home, "happier to have found an interpreter than if the crown of Leon had been placed on his head."

But, alas! Zayde is gone. She went out with Felime to walk by the sea-shore. There the two ladies were met by men who landed from a boat, and with whom they had a long discourse, which ended in their entering the boat and sailing away. They are gone without thinking it worth their while to come back and thank Alfonso for all his kindness and hospitality, without caring to see Consalvo again. They have vanished in misty sea horizons, and have not left their track on the pathless ocean.

Such incidents, of magnificently attired ladies being wrecked in small boats and departing thus suddenly, read strange now. We ask ourselves, did people come and go in that odd fashion in those days? But, indeed, that is not the question. Then, as now, there was amongst a large class of readers a diseased appetite for the singular and improbable, which had to be fed at the cost of simplicity and truth. The taste has changed in form, but it is unaltered in substance. The sea no longer throws up lovely strangers, and they no longer go away in rowing-boats — but that is merely because large vessels, steamers, and railroads have come in. The mysterious being who comes nobody knows how, who goes nobody knows where — who drops in and drops off so strangely, and whose counterpart we never meet with in real life — that mysterious creature who thrilled us to the very core not so long ago, is a child of the same race with the old romantic hero and heroine. But there is a difference; for being then nearer to the era of romance than we are, the tale-tellers placed in incidents the fascination our more common-place

mode of life compels us to place in individuals. Their characters are all clear and open enough — the secret is in the story; we have locked up our mystery in its deepest recess, the human heart.

Great is the despair of Consalvo on learning the flight of Zayde. He studies modern Greek; but this tardy knowledge brings no comfort with it; the arguments and entreaties of Alfonso are of no avail. Consalvo resolves to go and fight the Saracens in Sicily. At Tortosa, he overhears Zayde talking in a garden, and sees her the next morning in a pleasure barge on the Ebro. He is still exulting at the discovery, when soldiers arrest him in the king's name. All his entreaties to be at least allowed to exchange a few words with Zayde, who has not seen him, avail him nothing; his captors carry him away from the happy city that holds his mistress.

Here ends the first part; and though it partakes a good deal of the old novella, there is so much in the analysis of feeling that belongs to the modern school of fiction that it can still be read with pleasure. But the second part has lost all interest for us. When Madame de la Fayette forsook the delicate regions in which she moved so gracefully, her genius forsook her too. We find it impossible to care about her Moors, her Spaniards, her battles and sieges; for they are lifeless. In this respect, fiction is exposed to greater vicissitudes than the drama. The living men and women who speak the dead words of ancient comedy and tragedy impart to them their own life and warmth; in narrative the whole burden rests with the author.

Consalvo, on being taken before the King, recognises his former friend, Dom Garcia, who has undutifully dethroned his father, and is now married to Consalvo's sister. Dom Ramire is dead, and the faithless Nugna Bella has become the wife of a German noble, and is very wretched. Thus in one breath Consalvo finds himself avenged and restored to favour. The King sends him against the Moors; Consalvo performs prodigies of valour, takes Talavera, and saves from death a Moorish Prince — Zulema — who proves to be Zayde's father. Zayde herself is in a castle, which Consalvo enters for the protection of the Arab ladies that have taken refuge within its walls, but he little suspects the happy meeting that awaits him.

“He was taken to the spot where these ladies were. He

entered a magnificent apartment, adorned with Moorish taste and elegance. Several ladies, reclining on cushions, showed, by their sad silence, their grief at being prisoners. They kept aloof, as if through reverence, from a lady splendidly attired, and who was seated on a couch. Her head rested on one of her hands; with her other hand she wiped away her tears and concealed her face, as if she would have delayed a few moments more the sight of her foes. On hearing the noise made by the followers of Consalvo, she turned round, and he recognised Zayde — but Zayde more beautiful than he had ever seen her, in spite of the grief and agitation that appeared in her countenance. Consalvo was so much astonished that he seemed more moved than Zayde, and Zayde appeared to lose part of her fears on beholding Consalvo. They advanced towards each other, and both speaking at the same time. Consalvo addressed her in Greek, to beg her forgiveness for appearing before her in the character of a foe; whilst Zayde, speaking Spanish, told him she no longer feared the misfortunes she had apprehended, and that this would not be the first peril from which he would have delivered her. They were so amazed to hear each speak the language of the other, and their surprise made them feel so forcibly what had been their motives for studying those languages, that they blushed, and remained some time deeply silent."

This is a charming touch of nature. The picture of the two lovers meeting, and betraying in their very first words the passion over which absence has not prevailed, is both graceful and engaging. In these delicate and ingenious traits Madame de la Fayette excelled, and has not been surpassed. The experience of two centuries has given her successors more passion and more power; it has not given them more delicacy and more grace.

The rest of the story is briefly told. Zayde and Felime were the daughters of two Greek Christian ladies by two Arab and Moslem Princes, Zulema and Osmin. The young cousins were brought up in the island of Cyprus, and in the Christian faith; their fathers having returned to Africa a few years after their birth. They had reached the age of womanhood when Cyprus was visited by Alamir, Prince of Tharsis, who, after appearing struck with the beauty of Felime, and inspiring her with a strong though secret passion, falls distractedly in love with Zayde, by whom his adoration is coldly received,

Alamir deserves his fate. He is a charming prince, no doubt; but a more arrant male flirt never breathed. To be loved by beautiful ladies, and to cast them by as soon as that object is attained, has been the aim and purport of his life. Numberless are the hearts he has broken. He pleads, in self-defence, that all the ladies he admired insisted on marrying him, and that their love was not disinterested. One, indeed, he has found, Elsiberry, who loves him, and does not know that he is the Prince of Tharsis. Circumstances compel him to reveal his rank to her, and her joy on learning it fills him with suspicion. The more she loves, the cooler he grows, until at length he forsakes her, goes to Greece, and finds in Zayde's beauty and indifference the chastisement of all his sins. Zayde is, moreover, destined to the Prince of Fez by her father, who cleverly makes a celebrated astrologer, Albumazar, show her the prince's portrait, and tell her that she is destined to be the wife of the individual that portrait represents, whosoever he may be. Zayde is struck with the extraordinary beauty of her future husband, and, caught by that enchanting face, she vows she will marry none else. The astrologer little knew how truly his prediction would be fulfilled. The portrait is Consalvo's. His father lost it in a battle; the artist had faithfully represented the Spanish hero in the Moorish costume, and when the miniature came to the hand of Albumazar, he really believed it to be the portrait of the Prince of Fez, whom it strikingly resembled. Nor need we be surprised at the likeness — the Prince's mother is Consalvo's aunt! And now we know why, after being wrecked on the Spanish coast on her way to Tunis, Zayde looked at Consalvo, and what likeness it was she found between his features and those of her future husband.

So far the portrait is useful, but it also does a world of mischief. Alamir has seen it; he knows that Zayde is to marry the original, and he no sooner beholds Consalvo than he engages him in mortal combat. He falls, pierced with wounds that prove deadly. Feline cannot survive his loss, and the only two happy ones are Consalvo and Zayde, who are married in the midst of great rejoicings, and with the full consent of Zulema, who very properly becomes a Christian.

Zayde, though little read now, was long a popular story. Its romantic incidents amused the mere novel-readers; its ingenious traits gratified a more refined public. As a tale it

now possesses few attractions, and its merits were far surpassed by Madame de la Fayette herself in her next work. We think, moreover, that in "Zayde" she complied with the taste of her age in preference to her own — always an error, and that she followed with too much docility the advice of her friend Ségrais. The subject of "Zayde" was a mistake; and, when we compare the tale with her other productions, it scarcely seems her own.

Her world was not that of happy love and ancient chivalry. It was that world of polite courts, of silent struggles in a woman's heart, of love which fortune never blest.

CHAPTER IX.

"The Princess of Clèves."

Few works are so well calculated as the "Princess of Clèves" to give us a correct impression of the delicacy, polish, and refinement which marked the court of Louis XIV. Madame de la Fayette, though she made her characters live under the chivalrous Valois, certainly painted the men and women whom she saw daily, and she certainly gave them the courtly manners of which she was so good a judge. She gave us a true representation, but an idealized one, in so far that she selected the more amiable and refined traits, and carefully excluded the grosser features which often disfigured the contemporary manners and individuals. But that very selection which takes place in every work of fiction, in every time, is a test of intellectual refinement. At some epochs it is severe, at others it is very lenient.

Mademoiselle de Chartres, brought by her mother to the court of France in the reign of Henry the Second, soon married the Prince of Clèves. He was passionately enamoured; her only feeling for him was esteem. Her ignorance of the love he required from her, the calmness with which she heard his fond reproaches, embittered the happiness he felt in possessing her.

M. de Clèves saw from the first that his wife's enchanting beauty would fade before his love and his worth would make her lose that involuntary coldness which irritated and fed the fever of passion.

They had not been married long when the Duke of Nemours returned to court. This young and handsome nobleman is painted by Madame de la Fayette with that ideal of attractive and amiable qualities, distinct from virtues, which marked the prince in the fairy tale, and which was unfortunately more credible than Sir Charles Grandison, of moral memory. Witty, brave, accomplished, a fast friend but a faithless lover, the Duke of Nemours has never known a woman to resist him, nor met one whom he really loved. He is secretly hoping, however, for the hand of no less a personage than Queen Elizabeth, recently seated on the throne of England, when the sight of the Princess of Clèves drives ambition from his heart.

These two accomplished beings meet at a court ball, where, though total strangers till then, the King's whim or command makes them partners. Matched in personal beauty, in elegance, and grace, they seemed to have been meant to show that man's imprudence and haste are ever undoing what nature intended.

The ambition which made the Duke of Nemours aspire to the hand of Elizabeth, the pride which made Madame de Chartres anxious to secure the alliance of M. de Clèves, have divided for ever two beings destined to mutual and ardent love.

Madame de Clèves is too innocent to suspect her own feelings, but M. de Nemours knows the strength of his. His endeavours to hide his love from the world, yet to let Madame de Clèves see it — her gradual consciousness of the feeling he has inspired, her slower wakening to her own, her sad severity to her lover, her heroic striving against herself, make up the rest of the story, until we come to the catastrophe.

The character of the Duke of Nemours is skilfully managed. His love is deep and delicate enough to make him interesting, and no deliberate plan of seduction, no outbreak of passion, renders him odious, or mars with violence his tenderness. His is true love, sincere love, which freedom would make loyal and pure.

But the Duke of Nemours is only so far interesting as to justify the love of the Princess of Clèves. Her virtue, and its triumph over passion, are infinitely beyond him in our eyes. There lies the real drama, and it is most ably narrated.

Madame de Chartres dies when her daughter stands most

in need of her watchful tenderness. She had been prudently silent until then, but on her death-bed she speaks, and her warning adieu to a tenderly loved child is too characteristic of the seventeenth century — of its dignified tone, and its subdued feelings, not to be given here.

“‘We must part, my daughter,’ she said, holding out her hand; ‘the danger in which I leave you, and your want of me, increase my regret at our separation. You have a tenderness for M. de Nemours, I do not ask you to acknowledge it; I am no longer able to use your sincerity for your guidance. I have long perceived this feeling, but I would not mention it, lest I should thus make you conscious of it. Now you see it but too well. You stand on the edge of the abyss, and you need great efforts and much strength not to fall. Remember what you owe to your husband, remember what you owe to yourself, and remember that you are in danger of losing the reputation you have acquired, and which I have so much desired for you.’ Be strong and courageous, my child, retire from Court, compel your husband to remove you. Fear no course as too harsh or too painful; howsoever dreadful it may appear at first, it will be easier in the end than the misfortunes of an intrigue. If other reasons than those of virtue and duty could compel you to what I wish, I would tell you that, if anything could disturb the happiness I hope to enjoy on leaving this world, it would be to see you fall like other women; but if this misfortune is to be yours, I receive death with joy, in order not to witness it.’”

“Madame de Clèves wept over her mother’s hand, which she held clasped within her own, and Madame de Chartres, also feeling affected, said, ‘Farewell, my daughter, let us close a discourse which moves us both too much, and remember if you can all I have said to you.’”

“She turned on the other side as she uttered these words, and, without allowing her daughter to answer, she bade her call in her women. Madame de Clèves left her mother’s room in a state of mind that can be conceived, and Madame de Chartres only thought of preparing herself for death. She lived two days longer, during which she refused to see her daughter, because to her alone she felt attached.”

This is the spirit of the women of the seventeenth century — that clear, calm sense of duty, of right and wrong, which no sophistry could pervert; that religion so dignified and

moderate in form, so austere in reality, which indulged itself in no imaginative transports, but could make a dying mother deny herself the sight of her only child, that she might all the more surely turn her soul to God.

Madame de Clèves soon sees the necessity of following her mother's advice. Transient and unfounded jealousy shows her a peril unsuspected till then. The Duke de Nemours has been inconstant for other women. Why should he be faithful to her, and how wish a man whose passion she will not acknowledge to be faithful? She leaves the Court, and retires to a country house at Coulommiers, near Paris.

M. de Nemours is out hunting in the neighbouring forest; he cannot resist the temptation of approaching his mistress's abode. He comes to a pavilion, which he enters; it faces one of the avenues leading to the château, and down this avenue he sees Madame de Clèves and her husband coming towards him, and followed, as was the custom of the times, by a stately retinue of servants. His first impulse is to depart; his second, when he sees M. and Madame de Clèves sit down in the saloon of the pavilion, is to remain in one of the adjoining rooms, and listen to their conversation. What will she say to that husband whom he often thinks beloved, and of whom he is secretly jealous? M. de Clèves is the first to speak. He gently blames his wife for leaving Paris. Why will she not return? "What can keep you in the country?" he asks; 'you have a taste for solitude this time back which surprises and pains me, for it separates us. I even find you sadder than usual, and I fear you have some cause of grief?'

"Nothing troubles me," she replied, with an embarrassed air; 'but the tumult at Court is so great, and there is always such a crowd of people in your house, that both body and mind must needs weary, and rest be sought for.'

"Rest," he answered, 'is scarcely what suits your years. Both at home and at Court you are so that you can scarcely be wearied, and I rather fear that you are glad to be away from me.'

"It would be doing me wrong to entertain such a thought," she said, with increasing embarrassment; 'but I entreat you to let me remain here. If you could stay with me, I should be glad, provided you were alone, and without that infinite number of people who seldom or ever leave you.'

"Ah, Madam!" exclaimed M. de Clèves, 'your air and

your language show me you have reasons for wishing to be alone, which I do not know, and I entreat you to tell them to me.'

"He pressed her long without prevailing on her, and after she had resisted in a manner that increased her husband's curiosity, she remained silent, with downcast eyes; then suddenly addressing him, and looking up at him, she said: —

"Do not compel me to acknowledge what I have not the strength of confessing to you, though I have often intended doing so. Remember, however, that prudence will not allow a woman of my age, and mistress of her actions, to remain exposed at Court.

"What do you make me contemplate, Madam?" exclaimed M. de Clèves. 'I dare not tell you, for fear of offending you.'

"Madame de Clèves did not answer, and her silence confirming her husband in his thoughts, he resumed: —

"You say nothing, and that is saying I am not mistaken."

"Well, sir,' she answered, falling at his feet, 'I will confess to you, what was never confessed to a husband before; but the innocence of my conduct and intentions give me strength to do so. It is true, that I have reasons to leave the Court, and that I wish to avoid perils into which persons of my years sometimes fall. I have never given any signs of weakness and I should not fear to let any appear, if you would allow me to retire from Court, or if I still had Madame de Chartres to guide me. Howsoever perilous may be the course I take, I take it with joy, to keep myself worthy of you. I beg your pardon a thousand times; if I have feelings that displease you, at least I shall never displease you by my actions. Remember that, to act as I do, a woman must have more friendship and esteem for a husband than ever were felt before. Guide me, have pity on me, and love me still if you can.'

"Whilst she spoke, M. de Clèves felt beside himself, and remained with his head resting on his hands, and never even thought of making his wife rise. When she ceased and he cast his eyes upon her, when he saw her at his feet, her face covered with tears, her beauty so admirable, he felt ready to die of grief, and embracing and raising her he said: —

"Have pity on me yourself, Madam, I am worthy of your compassion, and forgive me if, in the first moments of an affliction so violent as is mine, I do not meet as I should a proceeding like yours. No woman that ever lived seems to me so worthy of esteem and admiration as you; but I also find myself the most unhappy man that ever has been. From the moment I saw you, I felt for you a passion which neither coldness nor possession could extinguish. That passion still endures; I never could inspire you with love, and I see that you dread feeling it for another. And who is he, Madam? — who is the happy man that gives you this fear? Since when does he please you? What has he done for that? What road has he found to reach your heart? I had consoled myself in some measure not to have moved it, by the thought that it could not be moved. And yet another has done what I could not achieve. I have both the jealousy of a husband and that of a lover. But that of a husband it is impossible to have, after behaviour like yours. It is too noble not to give one entire security; it consoles me even as a lover. The trust and sincerity you show me, are of infinite value; you esteem me enough to think I shall take no advantage of this confession. You are right; I shall not, and I shall not love you less. You make me unhappy, (by the greatest proof of fidelity wife ever gave her husband; but, Madam, pray conclude, and tell me who it is you want to shun."

"I entreat you not to ask this," she answered; "I am resolved not to tell you, and prudence requires, I think, that I should not name him."

He presses her in vain, to gratify his curiosity.

"My confession has not been the result of weakness," she answers, with much dignity; "and more courage is needed to confess the truth, than to undertake to conceal it."

Madame de Genlis pronounced the conversation of Madame de Clèves and her husband very cold. Impassioned it assuredly is not. It is the conversation of a well-bred man and woman, who cannot forget their good breeding even when one listens to, and the other makes, the most trying of confessions. And yet, what a depth of passion does not that daring confession betray! What truly Christian humility, and dread of self, mingle with that heroic resolve! How admirable a struggle between human frailty and human great-

ness takes place in the heart of that lovely and almost childish woman!

Her husband is scarcely less noble. His love, his trust, his esteem, and grief, are all full and deep. He justifies his wife's confidence in his honour, but by a delicate skill, he is never made heroic or irresistible. We feel that he is never more than an honest man. We respect him infinitely, but we can see why, with all her esteem for him, his wife does not love him; he is not attractive, and the power to charm, so lavishly granted to his rival, has been inexorably denied to him. After this sad conversation, M. de Clèves insists on his wife's return to Paris.

"'By giving you your liberty,' he nobly and frankly says, 'I give you narrower limits than I could prescribe.'"

But unfortunately for the peace of this generous husband and heroic wife, his questions and her replies, even whilst they did not enlighten him, convinced M. de Nemours that he was the man she wished to shun. He retired full of grief, admiration, and delight. He was happy to be loved so deeply, but the heroic greatness of his mistress warned him to keep no hope.

Admiration, stronger than prudence, rendered him indiscreet for the first time. Suppressing names, he related to a friend the conversation between M. de Clèves and his wife. Her confession was thought so singular, that it reached the young Scotch Queen, who repeated it to Madame de Clèves herself, as an unheard-of instance of generous fidelity. Unconscious of the pain she was inflicting, she even taxed M. de Nemours in her presence with being the man thus beloved.

Full of grief to have her secret partly known, Madame de Clèves accuses her husband of having betrayed her; and he, conscious of his silence, cannot help thinking that she has told all to M. de Nemours. He still thinks her virtuous, but he has not the same magnanimous confidence in her as at first. Passion and jealousy distract him; they cannot make him ungenerous, but they help to make him unjust.

The tragic death of King Henry the Second, killed in a tourney, and the changes at Court, make Madame de Clèves retire to her country house, where her husband, who must follow the King to Rheims for the coronation, willingly agrees to leave her. But there is involuntary bitterness in his parting

words; she stays behind to shun her lover; he knows it, and the knowledge is torment.

"‘I am more unhappy than I thought,’ he says; ‘I am the most unhappy of men. You are my wife; I love you like a mistress, and I see you loving another; that other is the most amiable man at Court, and he sees you daily, and he knows that you love him. And I could believe,’ he exclaimed, ‘that you would overcome the passion you feel for him. I must have lost my reason to have thought it possible.’

"‘I know not,’ sadly replied Madame de Clèves, ‘if you were wrong to judge favourably a step so extraordinary as that I took, but I do not know if I was not mistaken to think you would do me justice.

"‘Do not doubt it, Madam,’ answered M. de Clèves, ‘you were mistaken. You expected from me impossibilities as great as those I expected from you. How could you hope that I should keep my reason? Did you forget then that I loved you passionately, and that I was your husband? One would lead to all extremities; what cannot both do united? And what do they not do?’ he continued. ‘I have none but violent and uncertain feelings, which I cannot master. I do not find myself worthy of you — you no longer seem to me worthy of me. I adore, I hate you! I offend you, and ask you to forgive me. I admire you, and am ashamed of my admiration. In short, there is in me neither calmness nor reason. I do not know how I lived since you spoke to me at Coulommiers, and since the day when you learned from the Dauphiness that your adventure was known. I cannot imagine how it was discovered, nor what passed between you and M. de Nemours on this matter: you will never tell me, and I do not ask you to do so; I only ask you to remember that you have rendered me the most unhappy of men.’”

The jealousy and lurking distrust of M. de Clèves bring on the catastrophe. He leaves his wife without giving her time to answer. The next day he departs without seeing her, and though he writes her a letter “full of sorrow, esteem, and tenderness,” though she answers with assurances tending to give him full security for the future as well as the past, though M. de Nemours is with him near the person of the King, the first appearances against this unhappy and virtuous lady are received as proofs, and condemn her in her husband’s heart.

M. de Nemours asks leave to go to Paris, and M. de Clèves

does not doubt that to see his wife is the Duke's real object. Fearing if he followed himself that M. de Nemours would elude his observation, he commissions a prudent and trust-worthy gentleman to follow him, to learn if he goes to Coulommiers, and especially if he enters the garden at night. The prudent gentleman is too prudent. He sees enough to make him doubt the virtue of Madame de Clèves, and not what would have proved to him and her husband her fidelity.

He returns with doubtful tidings, which M. de Clèves interprets in the worst sense. His mistress is unfaithful, his wife has betrayed him! The greater his love and trust had been, the greater now is his sorrow. "A violent fever seized him the same night. At once he was pronounced in danger, and his wife was warned. She came in all haste; her husband received her coldly, but had enough fortitude and self-command not to reproach her. At length, as his illness was drawing to a close which everyone felt to be fatal, and as her tears and her grief convinced him that to her error she united perfidy and dissimulation, he could not refrain, one day that they were alone, from bidding her not show so much sorrow for a death she was causing.

"I die," he added, 'but know that you have rendered death sweet to me, and that I hold life odious, since I have lost the esteem and tenderness I had for you. What should I do with life,' he resumed, 'to spend it with one I have so much loved, and by whom I have been so cruelly deceived; or live divided from her, and take a violent course so opposed to my temper and the passion I felt for you? It has been beyond what you have seen, Madame; I concealed it from you, lest I should importune you, or lose some of your esteem, by behaviour unworthy a husband. Indeed, I deserved your heart. But once more I say it, I die without regret, since I could not possess, and can no longer desire it. But some day you will regret a man who loved you with a true and lawful passion. You will feel the sorrow which all sensible persons feel in such connexions, and you will know the difference there is between being loved as I love you, or between being sought by those who only want the honour of seducing you. But my death will set you at liberty. You can make M. de Nemours happy without crime. What matter about what will happen when I am no more. Why must I be so weak as to think of that?'"

Madame de Clèves, amazed at these reproaches, justifies

Scene of death.

herself eloquently, and convinces her husband of her entire innocence.

"I do not know," he replies, "if I ought to allow myself to believe you. I feel so near death, that I will see nothing of what might make me regret life. You have enlightened me too late. But it will be a relief to me to carry away the thought that you were worthy of the esteem I had for you. I entreat you that I may also have the consolation of believing that my memory may be dear to you, and that, had it been in your power, you would have had for me the tenderness you feel for another."

"He wanted to continue, but a sudden faintness seized him. Madame de Clèves summoned the doctors; they found him almost lifeless. Nevertheless, he lingered a few days longer, and died at length with admirable fortitude."

People died simply when Madame de la Fayette wrote, and their end could be thus simply told in a few words, without idle appeals to effect, or even to pity. And surely it was better thus.

The end of the tale is in keeping with the lofty ideal of virtue and heroic renunciation which it was the author's wish to embody. Madame de Clèves is distracted with grief at her husband's death. His passion for her, his admirable generosity, his end caused by a doubt of her fidelity, his involuntary grief at the thought of M. de Nemours's happiness, all act so powerfully on her mind, that her love seems gone, and sorrow for such a husband's loss the only feeling she now can experience. The sudden aspect of M. de Nemours, who lingers in her neighbourhood, convinces her indeed that her love is still living, but it also renews sad and austere thoughts of duty and sacrifice.

The imprudence of M. de Nemours, in entering her garden at Coulommiers, and which her husband so unfortunately interpreted against her, had caused the premature death of M. de Clèves; how then can his widow marry his rival? The world, indeed, would absolve her, but would her conscience? It assuredly would not; and in a first and last conversation with M. de Nemours, she frankly confesses her love, and her immovable resolve never to be his wife. They meet at her uncle's house, they remain alone together, they love, and love is now both innocent and free. Nor does Madame de Clèves stint her confessions. With a frankness which, as she proudly

adds, is rare in her sex, she says that she loves, and she finds a secret joy in the tardy and unavailing avowal. Since she is to speak no more, and the spectre of duty shall stand again, and this time for ever, between her and the only man she could love, she will at least have the last sad joy of complete sincerity.

The transports of M. de Nemours, his entreaties, moving and impassioned, have no power over the Princess of Clèves — she loves him with the whole might of her being — but he caused her husband's death, and she will never marry him.

Thus they part. He still hoping — she resolute, though sad. They meet no more. The struggle between love and duty nearly costs Madame de Clèves her life; she recovers, indeed, but she long remains in a languishing state, which gradually calms the fever of her heart.

"That long and close view of death," says Madame de la Fayette, speaking perhaps under the influence of her own declining health, "made the things of life appear to her differently from what they appear in health. The necessity of dying, which she saw herself so close to, accustomed her to wean herself from all things, and the length of her complaint made it a habit. When she recovered, she found, however, that M. de Nemours was not effaced from her heart; but to defend herself against him, she called to her aid all the motives she had not to marry him. There was a great struggle within her, but she at length conquered the remains of her passion, already weakened by the feelings her illness had inspired. The thought of death revived the memory of M. de Clèves; and that memory, which agreed with her duty, impressed itself deeply on her heart. The passions and the ties of the world seemed to her what they appear to persons who look on them from afar."

Under this saddened impression she retires from Court to a convent, not to take the vows, but to lead a calm, retired life. In this retreat M. de Nemours makes a last attempt to see her and prevail upon her, but, through a friend, she sends him her final answer: —

"She entreated him not to think it strange that she did not expose herself to the peril of seeing him, and of destroying by his presence feelings which she wished to keep. Yet she was not sorry he should know that, having found her duty and peace opposed to her inclination to be his, the other joys of

life had seemed so little to her that she had renounced them for ever. Now she thought but of the next world, and wished his feelings to undergo the same change."

M. de Nemours' grief is great, but it yields to time. Years and absence extinguish his passion. Madame de Clèves spends part of her time in the convent, and part in her own house, "but in a retirement, and in tasks more holy than those of the most austere convents; and her life, which was but short, left inimitable models of virtue."

And is this the end of passion, love, and hope? we feel tempted to ask as we close the book. Is this indeed the fate which awaits the fairest and sweetest promises of youth? She was too prudent to say so, yet we think that to raise this melancholy question was Madame de la Fayette's aim — not merely in this tale, but in all she wrote that may be called her own truly.

We have analyzed "Zayde" first, because it was her first real claim on attention; and the "Princess of Clèves" next to it, because it is her great claim on posterity. But she has written two other tales, which, though not very interesting or remarkable, are worthy of notice by their meaning: "Madame de Montpensier" is the germ, and "Madame de Tende" is the completion of the "Princess of Clèves."

It is an old truth, that we read not books but minds. The works of an author are a mental history; and it often happens that, spite the fine qualities and the excellence of that mind, it can shew itself under one aspect only. "Zayde," indeed, is very different from the "Princess of Clèves," but it is a less genuine book; Spanish romance gave it birth. The "Princess of Clèves" was the true offspring of personal feeling and observation.

Madame de la Fayette was beautiful and virtuous; we know nothing of her husband — we know that she had a long, tender, and innocent friendship for the Duke of la Rochefoucauld, of which even a censorious world never doubted the purity. But, without wronging her, we think that this good and amiable lady did not always find the path of virtue easy. We think that, without the austerity which leads to utter seclusion, and with too much principle to yield to the seductions of a world she would not forsake, she was sensitively alive to its perils. With a sort of sadness she may also have looked back on her own lot, and felt that she was capable of

giving and receiving a happiness which Providence had not granted her.

Thus these three tales, of which the "Princess of Clèves" is the most perfect form, embody one fact and its consequence. A beautiful woman, who does not love her husband — who loves another man, and all whose sorrows spring from that love.

A secret affection unites the Duke of Guise to a beautiful girl. She is married, however, to the Prince of Montpensier, and with time forgets that early love. Years have passed, when she meets once more the Duke of Guise. She is more beautiful by far than in her youth, and he is more enamoured than ever. Madame de Montpensier is virtuous — she does not mean to yield to this passion, but it steals on her. She becomes jealous of the Duke, then she allows him to talk of love, to write letters, and finally she grants him a meeting.

It is true that Chabannes, her husband's friend, her own calmly-despised adorer, assists her in procuring this interview with his rival, and is even requested by her to be present; but the end of so imprudent and so cruelly contrived a meeting is none the less fatal.

She is surprised by her husband. Her lover has time to escape, but Chabannes, who remains, is suspected, and leaves the house heartbroken at having betrayed his friend and lost his mistress. Madame de Montpensier falls ill with shame and grief. When she recovers she learns that Chabannes, through having left her husband's house, and gone off to Paris, has perished in the massacre of the Saint Bartholomew, and that the Duke of Guise has forgotten her for a new mistress, Madame de Noirmoutiers.

"This proved her death-blow. She could not resist the grief of having lost her husband's esteem, the heart of her lover, and the most devoted of friends. She died in a few days, at the flower of her age. She was one of the most beautiful princesses in the world, and would doubtless have been the happiest, if virtue and prudence had guided all her actions."

The grace, the calm yet severe morality, which mark Madame de la Fayette's writings, appear in this close.

The confession which Madame de Clèves makes to her husband was censured as improbable when that charming work appeared. Madame de la Fayette would not own herself in the wrong; and to carry matters still farther, she wrote Ma-

dame de Tende. Madame de Tende is the beautiful wife of a faithless husband. She is virtuous and proud, and feels secure in her own virtue. The Prince of Navarre, who wishes to marry the wealthy and widowed Princess of Neufchâtel, asks Madame de Tende to plead for him with that lady; but in requesting her kind assistance, he conceives a desperate passion for her, which he confesses, and which she at length returns.

Madame de Montpensier was imprudent; Madame de Tende is guilty. She betrays her friend, she deceives her husband, and is visited with heavy sorrows. The Prince of Navarre is killed in a siege; she cannot hide her guilt from her husband, and acknowledges it to him in a letter, leaving her fate in his hands. Time is not granted him to decide what that fate shall be; Madame de Tende dies penitent and heart-broken, but happy to die — receiving “death with a joy such as no one ever felt.”

Much more felicitous in conception and execution than either of these two tales is the “Princess of Clèves.” Here the lover is not faithless, the wife is not guilty. Here, too, the love is unfolded with a delicate art that has never been surpassed, though it has been so often imitated as to become almost commonplace. M. de Nemours declares in her presence that he should not like the woman he loved to go to a ball; and Madame de Clèves, still unconscious of her own passion, though aware of his, cannot bear to go, and give him that pain. She feigns illness, in which he believes. She would not like him to know the truth, and she is mortified that he does not know it.

They meet alone, and neither can scarcely speak to the other. Love is not once mentioned, and yet both feel it in the very air around them. Their discourse is of other things; and there is but one thing of which they are thinking. And never, till after M. de Clèves's death, is that reserve broken. The temptation, the troubled joy of chance interviews, cannot make either author or reader forget that Madame de Clèves is married, and that to speak of love to her is insult. Yet even this limited and distant intercourse alarms her virtue. “Her tenderness for that prince gave her an emotion she could not master. The most obscure words of a man who is loved are more agitating than the open declarations of a man who is not.”

There it is; the peril is in her. And yet once she yields.

A Court intrigue, in which M. de Nemours and her uncle are involved, compels her to see him for several hours in the presence of her husband. All three are engaged in the same task — inventing a fictitious letter, destined to deceive Catherine of Medici. For once, Madame de Clèves allows herself to be free, gay, happy, and smiling. The presence of the man she loves, the security she feels in that of her husband, combine to break the bonds of her long restraint. But M. de Nemours departs; she awakens as from a dream; knows the real meaning of her happiness, and bids it adieu for ever. This first and last indulgence, bright and brief as a stroke of sunshine, is her greatest weakness. Her keen and bitter self-reproaches are followed by her retirement to the country, and her sad confession to her husband.

We know the rest — how her love fared; how it ended in the sacrifice of inclination to duty: a noble and beautiful lesson.

A sad knowledge and experience of life, a conviction that nothing mortal can endure and give lasting peace to man's craving heart, an austere veneration for virtue, but also a keen sense of the sacrifices she commands, dreams of ideal love doomed to fade away in disappointment and be replaced by visions of eternity, seem to have haunted Madame de la Fayette whilst she wrote this, one of the first and saddest love-stories of the modern school of novel.

Its simplicity and brevity, above all, the nature of its interest, make it a landmark in the history of fiction. It has no escapes, no tragic accidents, no catastrophes, historical or domestic. Madame de Chartres dies naturally. M. de Clèves does not exactly die of grief, but of a fever brought on by the agitation of his mind. M. de Nemours overhears the Princess of Clèves's confession; but he never tempts her to forsake the right path; he is never surprised at her feet by an injured and incensed husband. The whole story lies in the struggle between love and duty in the heart of Madame de Clèves. Simply and without effort Madame de la Fayette reached the centre of all interest — the heart and conscience of a human being. The greatest, the finest, domestic novels that have been written since then possess no other.

CHAPTER X.

Madame de Tencin.

For nearly two centuries, Madame d'Aulnoy's fairy tales have been the delight of universal childhood. But though she did not intend to please none save childish minds by such fictions as those of "The Blue Bird" and "The Goldenhaired Beauty," they can no more be included in the food which full-grown minds require, than they can be called novels. They belong to fairyland — a wonderful region, which the novel dare not enter.

A real novel, however, Madame d'Aulnoy wrote, an historical romance, entitled "Hippolyte, Count of Douglas," which appeared at the close of the seventeenth century, and was reprinted so late as the first years of this. Even in the second year of the grim Republic, a bookseller of Rouen found it in his heart to issue forth an edition of this aristocratic tale, which appeared in the characteristic Rue de la Liberté.

The "Count of Douglas" was a successful novel. Its merits were of the clearest and most positive kind. A rapid narrative, a clear style, with that air of easy good-breeding which marked the French writers of the seventeenth century; well connected though improbable incidents, little or no improbability of detail, showed it to be more or less derived from the old Italian masters. It had however a delicacy of feeling to which they could lay no claim, and infinitely less power of character and incident than they can boast.

Character, indeed, is almost absent from this tale. The pleasant vivacity of the story-teller bears us on; but her men and women are all fictions. They are handsome, impassioned, brave, generous, or treacherous and cruel, but they are never real; it was not much the fashion then, at least not in novels, for the memoirs, letters, and plays of that period prove that people were as alive to the follies and weaknesses of human nature as they are now; but good-breeding overran literature, and sometimes made it refined, and often dull. There is but one touch of real, common human nature in all this tale; for of the sublime we have plenty, and though it is of the slightest, it comes in with all the power of contrast; it is the account we get of the little Abbess of Sainte Menoux, who belongs to the

illustrious house of Amboise, is fond of herself, and is rather foolish. Her character, though most slightly sketched, is a character; she does little; but that little is consistent with the natural insolence of high birth, joined to folly and selfishness.

The "Count of Douglas" is also an historical tale, and perhaps its faults belong partly to that character. It is a step towards deviation from truth, to paint systematically that which we have had no chance of knowing. For what reason was it that, from Mademoiselle de Scudéry down to the middle of the next century, almost all the French novels were historical? Boileau scolded her for converting Roman heroes into lovesick Celadons; but Madame de la Fayette erred in the same path, and always threw back the date of her tales; and Racine, the friend of Boileau, erred more than any in his tragedies. The truest genius of that age, Molière, alone was satisfied with the present. This assumption of an historical basis had two leading causes; the love of great names, in which readers could believe, and which must therefore be past, and the wish of introducing historical events. Thus the great reality was left for its shadows, and the romance of living life was sacrificed to that of life dead and gone. This fundamental want of truth is probably one of the causes that make historical novels die soonest of all. They are true to neither the time in which they were written, nor to that of which they treat.

Madame d'Aulnoy's "Count of Douglas" proves no exception to the rule. It has the faults of its kind, and few merits of its own. It is lively, and no more. We are sure that it was written by a very clever and agreeable woman, but we cannot think it a good book. Yet it was successful, and no doubt deserved its success.

Inferior to it are the historical novels of another lady, Madame de Fontaine's. Voltaire praised her "Countess of Savoy," and placed it above "Zayde." But Voltaire's praise, when addressed to individuals, meant little. The "Countess of Savoy" gave him the subject of a tragedy, "Tancrède," but it is a very cold novel. The most striking incident, that in which the lover sacrilegiously overhears his mistress's confession, and thus learns her passion for himself, is a step beyond the "Princess of Clèves." There the magnanimity of the wife's avowal saved it from indelicacy, and the jealousy of the lover helped to render his curiosity excusable.

Madame d'Aulnoy's daughter, Madame d'Heeres, Mademoiselle de la Roche Guilhem, and others of less note, also entertained the French public during the close of the seventeenth century, and early part of the eighteenth. But it was not until Madame Tencin's works were published, after her death, that a rival worthy of Madame de la Fayette appeared in her own peculiar line. There was little similarity, indeed, between the tender tales of one and the impassioned novels of the other, as little as between the pure and sincere friend of Madame de Sévigné and the profligate dissembler, who was the mother of D'Alembert.

Yet Madame de Tencin's is a very interesting life; for if she was unfortunately not a good woman, she lived at a time when women were much. Goethe thought that her story, and that of women who, like her, helped to form and to rule French society, would open some curious vistas of the French mind and temper, and even of the human intellect. Nor was he mistaken; it is a sad, or entertaining, and always instructive history; but of all its chapters, that which concerns Madame de Tencin is perhaps the saddest.

There are few lives more painful to write than this lady's. She had splendid talents, beauty, many excellent qualities, she lived surrounded by admirers and friends, yet one dark spot disfigured every advantage, every grace; and when she died, when her memory appeared at the terrible bar of opinion, she was left undefended. Not one friendly voice was raised to extenuate what could not be denied; not one appeal for mercy was heard when justice pronounced her condemnation.

Without seeking or wishing to defend a conduct and principle which cannot be defended, we think that Madame de Tencin's great error was to outlive youth and beauty, and die when the charm of both had departed. Her lovers were gone; the eyes of her friends were open; her defeated ambition and intrigues could serve no one; people began to think that profligacy was ugly; and when she was in her grave they said so. If a few years after leaving her convent Madame de Tencin had died in the bloom of her charms, we might have heard another story.

Claudine Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin was born in Grenoble, in the year 1681. Her father was councillor in the parliament of that city; he was poor, proud, and unscrupulous.

Claudine could not marry suitably to her birth; she must become a nun. She resisted, but resistance was useless. She entered the monastery of the Augustines of Montfleuri, and reluctantly took the vows that bound her for ever.

The convent of the Augustines was not a very close or austere prison. It stood at the end of a fashionable promenade, and was the rendezvous of the promenaders, who visited freely their sisters and friends. Cardinal Lecamus tried to interpose; he reminded the nuns that they had left the world, and that the world should not come to them. But his voice was not heeded, and the monastery continued to be the resort of the last persons that should have been seen within its walls. So reluctant a nun as Mademoiselle de Tencin could not but avail herself with pleasure of this unexpected freedom. She was very pretty, she was fascinating, she was witty and graceful; every one admired, and almost every one liked her. She captivated both the abbess and her confessor. She was not merely allowed to receive visits; she was permitted to return them. She enjoyed that degree of liberty which makes the remaining bonds all the more galling. The convent and monastic life became intolerable, and she seriously set about freeing herself from both. Her director appears to have been a weak, good man, a great deal more under her control than she under his. He must have known how cruelly she was compelled to take the veil, and he must have pitied her. Through him she learned all the steps it was necessary for her to take in order to regain her liberty. He did not merely give her information, he assisted her. She protested against her vows, and five years after her profession she succeeded in being transferred to the chapter of Neuville, near Lyons.

Mademoiselle de Tencin was now a Canoness, but she was not satisfied with this degree of freedom. She went to Paris, where she resided under the protection of her brother, the Abbé de Tencin, and where she took active steps to break the last tie that bound her to the obligations of a religious life.

Of the Abbé de Tencin it is difficult to say anything, save that he was one of the scandals of the Church in the eighteenth century, and one of the most corrupt men of that corrupt age. Handsome, profligate, intriguing, and unscrupulous, he stopped at nothing. He committed simony, and attempted to justify himself by public perjury. Vice seems to have been in his nature. He had a faint degree of shame: enough to

regret the scandals that stained his life — not enough to repent them.

It is said that when Mademoiselle de Tencin came to her brother's house, she had already been the heroine of some scandalous adventures: it is said, but not proved, and it does not matter much. She had a long life before her to ill-use, and her brother's precepts and example were not needed to lead her into sin. She soon found herself the centre of a little court. Bolingbroke and Fontenelle were two of her most fervent admirers. Fontenelle she enlisted in her cause, and through him she obtained her final release from all monastic obligations. That she had had the art of persuading the selfish, polite, and icy Fontenelle to give her that assistance, and take some real trouble for her, was always considered one of Madame de Tencin's triumphs. She was probably aware of it when, laying her hand on his heart one day, she said: "You have got no heart there, my dear Fontenelle; it is another brain."

Madame de Tencin — for she dropped Mademoiselle — was not thirty. She was very pretty, we are told by her cotemporaries; and they are the best judges of that delicate question. Her portraits vary extremely. In one we behold a spirited, bold-looking girl, with melting dark eyes; another, an older one, in which we see her with flowing locks and nymph-like garments, shows us a comely woman with delicate features and eyes half-closed. The serious, intelligent face wears an unpleasant expression of suavity and cunning. Both portraits convey the impression of what is commonly called good looks; but in neither do we see a pleasing or an attractive countenance. Pleasing to many she was, however, in this the bloom of her charms. Fontenelle and Bolingbroke were soon discarded for a more favoured suitor, Canon-Destouches. She is said to have been violently in love with him. They had a child, to which she secretly gave birth in her brother's house, and which was found on the steps of Saint Jean le Rond, on the 17th of November of the year 1717. A poor woman, a glazier's wife, named Rousseau, took care of it; and that child grew up to be one of the most learned and celebrated men of his age — the mathematician, D'Alembert.

This is one of the great stains in Madame de Tencin's life. She was not merely weak or profligate — she was heartless. She could send out her child to perish, for all she knew, on a

bleak November morning; she could forsake it utterly, trouble herself no more about it, and live on and feel happy. That she dare not, for her brother's sake and her own, acknowledge it, is certain; but between that and deserting it there was an abyss; and, without rushing on ruin, a mother might have found some way to care and provide for her child. But it was not done; and with a tie and a burden less, Madame de Tencin went on her course.

She led a very strange life. Devoted to her brother, and ambitious for him and through him, she assisted him by her talents, her subtlety, and her daring spirit of intrigue. The times were propitious and admitted the most flagrant contradictions. Long before the birth of D'Alembert, Madame de Tencin had thrown herself into the foremost ranks of a now-forgotten religious war: that caused by the Bull Unigenitus. She espoused the side held by her brother — it was the strongest, as a matter of course. Jesuits and Jansenists had been at variance under the last austere years of Louis XIV.'s reign; they continued their strife under the profligate sway of the Regent, and neither saw that in the infamy and corruption of those days lay the peril of all faith.

But the Bull Unigenitus does not seem to have done much for Madame de Tencin. Her charms appeared for a time to act more powerfully than her eloquence and her zeal.

The Duke of Orléans, then Regent of France for the infant Louis XV., one of the ablest and also one of the most profligate men in France, felt a passing caprice for Madame de Tencin. With all her tact and talent, she mistook the character of this licentious Prince, so far as to talk politics to him. Disgusted with the attempt, he gave her a cynical answer, and by leaving her he also gave her a practical proof that Philip of Orléans and the Ruler of France were two distinct persons. The contempt of women, which lies at the heart of such men as the Regent, and his integrity as a statesman, saved France from the insolent favouritism of his successor.

Madame de Tencin was too ambitious and too able not to feel keenly so bitter a disappointment. Unable to secure the Prince Regent, she was satisfied with Dubois, and, through him, money, power, and the means of success came to herself and her worthy brother the Abbé. One of Madame de Tencin's biographers, and by no means a partial one, observes, and

very justly, that howsoever degrading it was for a clever and handsome woman like her to become the mistress of a creature like Dubois, she could not feel the ignominy of that tie as posterity has felt it for her. Dubois was successful then, and success wielded a magician's wand which rules over all hearts save the austere and the pure. France was at his feet — honours were showered on him from every side — he was dreaded, not despised, for he was strong, and when did not the world bow before strength?

The Abbé de Tencin was very useful to his sister's lover. In him he found a subtle and unscrupulous agent. The intrigues of this worthy trio are the history of the times, and a sad history it is. Tencin helped Dubois to become a cardinal, and Dubois made him an archbishop, and Madame de Tencin zealously forwarded the letters of the Roman prelates, which the Abbé de Tencin had opened in Rome, and which Dubois had re-sealed in Paris. But it was all discreetly done. Madame de Tencin went on agitating about the Bull Unigenitus; and, spite that provoking business in which simony was proved against him in his own handwriting, as he was going to attest his innocence upon oath, her brother carried a bold front, had some share in the favour of James II. of England, and converted the Scotchman, Law, who required to become a Catholic before he could half ruin France by his famous system. The conversion had to take place at Melun, however, for its value and sincerity were known, and the Parisians were then, as they are now, a satirical race.

Dubois and the Regent died in 1723. The Duke of Bourbon became prime-minister — or, rather, Madame de Prie, a beautiful and profligate woman, ruled France in his name. Their sway was brief. Madame de Prie had power enough to make the King of France marry Mary Leczimska, a poor and plain Princess, ten years his elder, and the daughter of an exiled king; but she had not the art to keep her lover in power: he was exiled, and she shared his fate. The mild and moderate Fleury succeeded them, and, annoyed at Madame Tencin's persistent zeal about the Bull Unigenitus, he requested her to leave Paris. She retired to Orléans, but soon returned, through the influence of her brother.

On the Regent's death he had turned his worship towards the Duke of Bourbon, and on that prince's exile he had directed his homage to his successor. The Bishop of Fréjus

was too wise to be deceived, and too moderate not to know how to forgive. He made use of De Tencin, and recalled his sister.

In singular contrast to Madame de Tencin's religious zeal was the death of La Fresnaye, a councillor, who blew his brains out in her house, leaving a testament in which he accused her of intending to murder him, and of having robbed and cheated him to a considerable extent. This event took place in 1726. La Fresnaye had been one of Madame de Tencin's lovers. She was arrested and sent to the Bastille; but she was soon set free, and though no legal proof of her innocence has remained, no reasonable person can think her guilty. The testament of La Fresnaye is written in such a spirit of hostility, jealousy, and revenge, that it defeats its own ends. Madame de Tencin may have cheated him, and may have been unfaithful, as he averred; but it is plain, too, that he killed himself to ruin her. His death did not achieve that purpose.

The story was hushed up, and the unscrupulous woman of forty-five intrigued more zealously than ever.

Activity, political or intellectual, was to Madame de Tencin the very condition of life. The strength of her mind, her indignant scorn of weakness, and in some respects her just views of public matters, are amongst her few claims to respect. Her letters to Richelieu are very remarkable. Her ambitious affection for her brother, her persevering efforts for his success, and her unscrupulous use of any means to reach power, are frankly displayed in these confidential epistles to a political friend and accomplice. De Tencin had attempted to draw the attention of Louis XV. to the post-office abuse of opening letters; "but as usual," says Madame de Tencin, "he, the King, has done all wrong, and the evil is no less." Farther on she adds, candidly enough, "I do not know how far this way of getting at the secrets of others may be approved, but it was first used by Louis XIV., and has been much improved under this reign; but since it is used, let it at least be useful to the King, and not merely to ministers, in order the better to deceive him." Had De Tencin been one of the ministers, Madame de Tencin, who knew the art of sealing up the opened letters, might have thought differently. But what moral sense could there be, what generous or noble ambition could survive, under an absolute sovereign of whom a few

lines lower Madame de Tencin could say without slander, "What takes place in his kingdom does not seem to concern him. Nothing moves him. He is thoroughly indifferent in the council, he subscribes to all that is offered to him. Verily it is enough to drive one to despair, to have to do with such a man. One can see that, in any matter whatsoever, his apathetic temper inclines him to the side that gives least trouble, even should it be the worst. . . . It is even said that the King avoids knowing what takes place. He says it is better to know nothing than to learn evil tidings. This is a fine *sang-froid*; I shall never have as much, though the matter concerns me much less than it does him."

After such a picture, we must not wonder at the words of scorn and despondency which, in the bitterness of her heart, Madame de Tencin cannot repress. She openly declares that she despises the weak sovereign who can thus be swayed by every will; and to the same friend, in whom she had perfect trust, she prophetically announces that, unless God puts forth his hand, the State is lost. "I tell you everything," she says, frankly, "for boundless trust is the result of true friendship."

That Madame de Tencin was capable of friendship, her worst enemies have not denied. She could love a friend faithfully, and cordially hate a foe. She had some of the qualities on which men pride themselves, but for which women are rarely praised. Duclos, who knew her well, and who has said the best and the worst of her, says that she was ambitious, but disinterested. Money to her was a means, never an end. But in spite of ambition, of her brother's position, of the Duke of Richelieu's friendship, and of her own experience in a talent for intrigue, Madame de Tencin was excluded from politics. She turned to literature; her tales were probably composed in this calmer period of her life, and a literary society, a *bureau d'esprit*, gave her intellectual activity free scope.

If the Ruelles of the seventeenth century were too exquisitely refined, they possessed, however, a great charm. They were essentially polite. The nation, satisfied with its political condition, with the glory of a splendid reign, and the magnificent supremacy of France, enjoyed in social circles that mixture of activity and repose which stamps a great age. Even thus the ancient Greeks may have rested calmly discussing and calmly enjoying. The Ruelle was an academy;

it dealt with the national language, gave it laws, enlarged its boundaries, and fixed them for ever. It devoted whole evenings to the metaphysics of love, but of sublime love, distinct from passion; dissertations on moral virtues, on politeness, on magnanimity, on social duties, on splendour, on anything that could make life a nobler aim, or a more refined reality, were there heard with favour, and treated with acuteness. Men and women talked essays, it is true, but without coldness or pedantry. Never were the French more lively, more brilliant, than in this intellectual phasis of their history.

The Bureau d'Esprit, though it came so soon after the Ruelle, offers a very different picture. The Ruelle laboured to fashion, polish, and improve; the Bureau d'Esprit seems to have had but one great task — the personal glorification of its members, as engaged in the then general work of destruction. Rarely have men pushed themselves into great reputation with so little personal merit to support it as in France during the eighteenth century; and rarely, too, have the intellectual representatives of a great nation hated and insulted its past and present with more virulence, and troubled themselves so little with a future they helped to make darker and more sanguinary.

Madame de Tencin did not show active zeal in favour of any particular doctrine of the day; her brother's ecclesiastical dignity would alone have prevented her from favouring the anti-Christian movement, if she sympathized with it, which is doubtful. No clue has remained to her real feelings on religion. For all we know, she may have been an atheist, or she may have had that faith which adds but another sting to conscience, and is not incompatible with the worst actions.

Few women who had her talents, and sought power with such eagerness and pertinacity, spoke less of themselves than she did, and cared less for posterity.

Her political feelings, however, are partly known to us; and she was too sceptical, by the tone of her mind, by her life, by her very disappointments, not to make one with the great body of murmurers against the State. She opened her house to them, and she patronised them with zeal and judgment. When Montesquieu published his "*Esprit des Lois*," she bought a large number of copies, which she presented to her friends. She encouraged young authors, received them

kindly, gave them excellent advice, and got little thanks for her pains.

Marmontel was amongst those whom she thus favoured early; he acknowledges it, prefers no particular charge against her, yet speaks of her with a mixture of admiration and dislike which is of itself sufficiently significant. She charmed him at first by her calm, indolent, and amiable manners. She spoke so kindly, questioned with such an appearance of interest, seemed so thoroughly absorbed in the answers her questions elicited, that the young man's self-love found such attention sweeter than flattery.

This is acknowledged to have been Madame de Tencin's seduction; it was a power that survived beauty and youth — she could become one with whomsoever spoke to her. Her mind was so varied, had resources so infinite, and was so accustomed to view the different aspects of life and human nature, that without any effort of will or patience she could assume the tone, the manners, and the very feelings that were most calculated to charm her hearer. That slow, ungraceful, loud speaking, vain, and shy young Marmontel, just stepping into Parisian society, with his tragedy in five acts, his ambition, his dreams, and his talent, which he took for genius, was a good subject for Madame de Tencin to study. He felt later that, if he had received genuine kindness, he had also been looked through by a searching eye — and this was an offence which the pride of success knew not how to forgive. Hence a resentment which nothing seems to justify, some ironical reflections on Madame de Tencin's apparent *bonhomie*, and a very lively and more lenient account of the society over which she presided.

"I there saw assembled Montesquieu, Fontenelle, Mairan, Marivaux, the young Helvetius, Astruc, and others, all literary and scientific men, and in the midst of them a woman of singular talents and profound judgment, but who, with her plain and simple exterior, had more the look of the housekeeper than of the mistress. This was Madame de Tencin. . . . I soon perceived that each guest came there ready to act his part, and that the wish of shining often interrupted conversation from following an easy and natural course. Everyone seemed anxious to seize, as quickly as possible, and as it flew by, the opportune moment of uttering his *bon mot* and his anecdote — of ushering his maxim or his trail of light and

brilliant wit; and this necessary *à propos* was often far-fetched. In Marivaux the impatient wish of displaying his sagacity and finesse was visibly manifest. Montesquieu waited with more calmness until the ball should come to him, but he waited for it nevertheless; Mairan watched for the favourable opportunity; Astruc disdained to wait; Fontenelle alone let it come to him without seeking for it, and he made so discreet a use of the attention with which he was heard, that his ingenious remarks and charming stories never lasted more than a moment. Attentive and discreet, Helvetius listened and collected for the future."

Was it indeed in the intercourse of Madame de Tencin's friends that Helvetius found the materials of the disgraceful book which gave him celebrity as an author, but would have covered him with infamy had not his own life belied its precepts? If so, we must acknowledge that whatever her life may have been, Madame de Tencin left the theory of her actions to her more philosophic friends, and was satisfied with Christianity and its morality in her own works. They have not, indeed, the exquisite and austere purity of the preceding age; but if they do not always escape coarseness, they are certainly not immoral tales. Nothing in them is low, mean, or ignoble; passion is pure, lofty, and often heroic. They are conceived in a spirit of faith, which does not exclude reality."

Nothing is more characteristic of Madame de Tencin than these stories. That she wrote them with the intention of remaining unknown is evident from the dedications prefixed to two, and which are calculated to mislead the public; and that she took no steps to secure their being published is no less certain. They were found amongst her papers after her death, and then first given to the world.

Her restless and not happy life, if we look at the sources of true happiness, closed on the 4th of December, 1749, in the sixty-eighth year of her age. What it was we have seen; her works will show us under what aspect she viewed that other life of which we all bear an image in our hearts — that life whose very sorrows are, like its joys, other than we ever feel in this.

CHAPTER XI

"The Memoirs of Comminge" — "The Misfortunes of Love."

MADAME DE TENCIN is distinguished from her predecessors by a quality which they would have esteemed a defect — the eloquence of passion.

Their love was lofty, sublime, or tender; it could make heroic sacrifices, express itself in the most delicate, refined, and courteous speech, but it shunned passion as a breach of decorum; it was polite, but it was not eloquent. Indeed, we do not think we exaggerate when we trace back to Madame de Tencin, in the "Memoirs of Comminge," the first real manifestation of impassioned eloquence in the whole world of modern fiction.

Aphra Behn had vigour, tenderness, and great dramatic power; but she was a rude and careless writer; her passion, too, was coarse and sullied, and when she is eloquent, it is in wrath and generous indignation at the unmerited calamities of a noble and heroic being. No one need be told that her successors, the great English novelists of the last age, did not deal in the eloquence of passion. The domestic novel is English, the impassioned novel is French. Its great and first triumph was Rousseau's "Nouvelle Héloïse," and ten years before that work was published Madame de Tencin died. Rousseau's marvellous success was like many a success of later times, not merely the result of his genius, but also of a secret want in the public, a want which he felt himself, and therefore knew well how to supply. We think that Madame de Tencin, too, felt this want, though she had not the genius that could satisfy it.

We think that in the gentle and austere fictions of the preceding age, in the subtle or licentious novels of her own times, she too missed something, a troubled charm, more than mere tenderness, a purer fever than that of the senses — but still a fever, which the wisdom, both severe and serene, of the seventeenth century had checked, as more dangerous than actual coarseness.

Profligacy is the low aspect of the human mind in all ages; but passion in literature is especially characteristic of epochs when religion is weak. It is the sign of perverted faith, of perverted adoration, turned from their lawful centre to that frail

idol, a human being, and that weakest of all aims, the frenzied gratification of self. Wherever we see an impassioned novel, the epitome of the love two human beings can bear towards each other, and the exclusion of all else, there we also see souls distracted by doubt or sunk in gloom, turning from the sublime aspirations of their childhood and their youth — from God, from duty, from honour — to delusive hopes, and the still more delusive phantasms of all they have left behind them. Then is the reign of every false virtue and every false divinity. In religious epochs it is not so. Then there are but two camps in the intellectual as well as in the real world. On one side palms love — lofty, heroic, and pure; on the other, revels shameless licence. But there is no room for passion, for passion claims to be the heart, and licence, more frank, does not.

So much as love can be commanded, it is commanded by Christianity. The conjugal exhortations of Saint Paul to the early Christians, breathe the very spirit of tender and self-sacrificing affection. But as clear through the whole of the New Testament is the precept, Guard your hearts. Love you may, you must, live and die for that love, but guard your heart, for it is no human being's, it is not yours, its allegiance belongs to God alone. Thus, though there may be passion, even when religion is strong, it is silent; for then the might of law is acknowledged, and passion, to speak truly, is sedition.

When these bonds have grown loose, or been broken, when the religious and intellectual would call themselves free, passion speaks. She dare not, indeed, proclaim herself happiness, for her own confessions would belie her; but she puts on a sublime aspect, made to delude weak hearts. In vain the works that prove the disease also proclaim it — in vain they say passion is ill-fated and sorrowful — in vain they show us the death-bed of Héloïse, the suicide of Werther, the tragic end of Delphine and her lover. In vain they seem to warn us away from the perils they reveal; these are dangers that are most such when they are known. Love is natural and sweet; it has pangs, jealousy, hopes, and dreams; but passion is fictitious love. Passion is the morbid work of the imagination, the refinement of the senses, both bent on one visible object of beauty, and it makes all else in life seem worthless till they are gratified. It is the subtle worship of self, but under a nobler guise than that of self, though still essentially the same worship. Its fever reads like the triumph of life's eventful tale.

the glorious close of a few brief and ardent years. There lie the falsehood and the danger.

Show us passion as it is, and none need fear it. Show us the delirium, the wakening, the shame, the feebleness, the sluggish coldness of all its first and its last expiring phases, and you show us the truth, though, perhaps, like many truths, it is too frightful for contemplation. But this the impassioned novel never does. There passion is really divine — it is not happy, but it is immortal. It follows Werther in his grave, it shows us not the marks of time in Charlotte's fair face. Its victims or its objects all pass away from our gaze in the full bloom of loveliness, strength and youth. There is nothing to remind us of Rousseau's real Julie in her decrepit, foolish age; of Goethe's eightieth year, of Madame de Staël's pining for life on her death-bed. These fine geniuses penned forth the fever of their heart in eloquent pages, gave hero and heroine a beautiful and consistent end, and put away the bitter and ugly truth. With them passion must be gratified, and it must kill. The disease is not quite so fatal. It may kill, but when it does not, it is killed itself by time, its general termination. Its violent end, however, makes it look more real than the old heroic Scudéry love.

This required the constancy, devotion, and ardour of a lifetime, and was not easily imitated. But the physical weakness which has often made disappointed affection end in disease and death, or the sudden act of despair that has put an end to life and love, have been held sufficient to prove a passion which a little more strength to resist, a little more patience to live on, would have humbled and conquered.

Who better than Madame de Tencin can have known the real brevity of a feeling she had inspired and experienced too often? But the worst and the weakest have some ideal to which they cling, and hers was the immortality of ardent love. It was, at least, the conception of love in which she was most successful, and she never succeeded so well in it as when she united it to religious enthusiasm. Here, too, the ex-nun, the sister of De Tencin, the mistress of Dubois, had an ideal; she felt the poetry of religion, but not its austerity — the charm of cloisters and convent homes, but not their innocence. She blended in her fictions, as they may have blended in her life in unknown struggles between passion and faith, two feelings, which, though most opposed, strangely contrive to mingle in

many a human heart. A dangerous union, which began but did not end with her — which helped to sanctify guilt and to desecrate religion — a union from which the pure and reverent Christianity of Mademoiselle de Scudéry and Madame de la Fayette would have shrunk as from profanation. What would the austere censors of "Clelia," or of the "Princesse de Clèves" — for both had censors — have said of the dying speech of Adelaïde? Here was food indeed for grave senators and reverent matrons! Here was love under an aspect they had not dreamed of; love breathing its last sighs on the ashes of a Trappist monk; passion strong in death, and all the more mighty that it was guilty and forbidden.

The "Memoirs of Comminge" is the shortest and the best of Madame de Tencin's tales. It is a straightforward story, unencumbered with episodes, dealing little in the detail of the feelings on which it rests, but bearing us on irresistibly to its calamitous end.

It is an autobiography, and the writer begins his story by entering into the origin of the bitter family differences that caused all his sorrows.

"My great-grandfather, who had two sons, bestowed extensive lands on the younger one to the prejudice of the elder, and caused him to assume the name of Marquis of Lussan. The friendship of the two brothers suffered no abatement; they even caused their children to be brought up together. But this common education, of which the object was to unite them, on the contrary made them enemies almost from their birth."

The son of the Count of Comminge is jealous of his cousin, the son of the Marquis of Lussan. This jealousy becomes so violent a hatred that the two boys must be separated. They grow up to man's estate, and with them grow hatred and jealousy in De Comminge, disdain and dislike in De Lussan. Both marry. M. de Comminge has a son, and M. de Lussan a daughter, who have never met.

The Count of Comminge is bent on recovering the estates of which his grandfather has deprived him. He has learned that title-deeds establishing his rights are to be found in a monastery; he sends his son to claim them, and causes him to bear an assumed name, the better to ensure the secrecy of his errand. The young man goes, procures the papers, and being near Bagnères, and having some time to spare, he visits that

watering-place, where he is known as the Marquis de Longaunois.

He has not been there long when he meets with a beautiful girl, with whom he falls in love. He does his best to let her see his passion, but he cannot tell it — he cannot address her in the language of flattery and admiration.

"Until then," he observes, "I had said to every woman more than I had felt; I could not speak now, when I was really moved."

He soon learns the name of this beautiful maiden: she is Adelaïde de Lussan, the daughter of his father's hated cousin. But when did obstacles prevent the growth of love? De Comminge thinks little of angry and inimical fathers; he has but one strong fear: lest Adelaïde should have been taught to detest his name.

"I therefore took the resolve of concealing, even more carefully than I had done, my real name and state," he says, "and of seeking every means to please her; but I was too much in love," he adds, "to use any means save that love itself."

Two months are spent thus. De Comminge has every reason to believe that Mademoiselle de Lussan sees and shares his affection, when his father abruptly sends for him. The lover is thunderstruck; absorbed in his passion he had never thought of separation. He obeys, however, but first he deliberately burns the title-deeds on which rest his father's claims, and, without informing her of this sacrifice, he reveals his love and name to Adelaïde.

Mademoiselle de Lussan is startled, but it is too late: she too loves. They part, full of mutual love, esteem, and boundless trust, and indulging in all those hopes and illusions of strong passion which a cold future seldom fulfils.

The wrath, the fury of M. de Comminge may be imagined when he learns that his son has burned the precious title-deeds, and dares to think of marrying the child of his detested cousin. He sends him into banishment, in a wild château of the Pyrenees, surrounded with pine-trees, cypresses, rocks, and falling torrents. Now De Comminge's abode would be considered delightfully wild and picturesque; then it was held but a dreary and savage solitude — a place of punishment, and the true home of melancholy. Not satisfied with this, the Count of Comminge insists on marrying his son to a Mademoi-

selle de Foix. The young man obstinately refuses, and is thrown into the castle dungeon. Here a letter from Adelaïde reaches him, which fills him with despair and grief. Adelaïde, on learning from Madame de Comminge the young man's generous sacrifice and its fatal consequences, adopts a desperate remedy to deliver her lover from captivity and persecution. She marries M. de Benavides, a disagreeable, narrow-minded, jealous Spaniard, selected by her because even in her choice she will not be suspected of inconstancy by the only man she ever can love.

These incidents of the story are romantic; but, for the times when it was written, they are not improbable. There were tyrannical fathers in those days; we all know Mirabeau's youth. Then, as ever, too, love triumphed over family dissensions, or could generously sacrifice its own felicity to the good of the beloved object. Less likely, though certainly not impossible or unnatural, are the means used by the author to lead us to the fatal conclusion.

On recovering his freedom, De Comminge, after a severe illness brought on by grief, has but one thought — to see Adelaïde once more. He passes himself off for a painter; succeeds, under that character, in entering M. de Benavides's château in Biscay; and, after some time, he can exchange a few words with Adelaïde, who entreats him to depart. Her husband, unfortunately, finds them thus engaged. In his jealous fury he wants to kill Adelaïde, and in her defence M. de Comminge wounds M. de Benavides. The prayers of Adelaïde compel him to take refuge in a neighbouring convent. M. de Benavides recovers, but his wife is taken with a violent fever that carries her off on the fifth day of her illness. On learning these fatal tidings, De Comminge, wearied of life, returns to France and enters the monastery of La Trappe. He had been three years in the walls of that austere abode, when the tolling of the bell summoned him and his brethren to witness the death-bed of one of the monks. The dying man was already lying on the penitential ashes, ready to receive the last sacraments. He requested the father abbot's leave to speak, and that permission being granted, he made a strange confession. The dying brother is Adelaïde herself. The report of her death was an invention; and, on her husband's decease, she found herself free, after two years of close captivity. The world held her as one dead; and dead to it, since

she could not learn what her lover had become, she resolved to be. Revealing her name to none, she assumed male attire, and went back to France. A strange feeling made her enter the church of the monastery of La Trappe. The monks were in their stalls singing psalms. She recognized the voice and the features of M. de Comminge. In her despair she blasphemed Providence that had restored him but to snatch him away, and sever them by irrevocable vows. But these first transports over, she resolved, since more was not granted, to live in the same abode, and breathe the same air, with her lover. She presented herself to the abbot, asked to be received into the brotherhood, and, being accepted, took the vows.

"But what mood," she exclaims, "did I bring to your holy exercises? A heart full of passion, and absorbed in its love. God who, in abandoning me to myself, doubtless wished to give me stronger reasons of feeling humbled some day before Him, allowed me to rejoice in the poisoned sweetness of breathing the same air, of being in the same place with the loved one. I followed him step by step; I helped him in his labour, so far as my strength allowed — and these moments paid me for all I suffered. My madness, however, went not so far as to betray myself. But what motive stopped me? The fear of disturbing the repose of him who had destroyed mine. But for that fear, I might have attempted everything to snatch from God a soul I believed to be wholly His.

"Two months ago, to obey the rule of the holy founder, who, by the continual thought of death, wished to sanctify his religious, they were all ordered to dig each his own grave. As usual, I followed him to whom I was bound by bonds so shameful. The sight of that grave, the ardour with which he dug it, filled me with a grief so keen, that I was compelled to step aside and allow tears to flow which I could not restrain. From that moment I felt as if I were going to lose him. That thought never left me. My passion gathered new strength. I followed him everywhere; and if I spent a few hours without seeing him, I felt as if I should never see him again.

"This was the happy moment which God had prepared to draw me towards Him. We went to the forest to hew wood for the convent, when I perceived that my companion had left me. I looked for him uneasily. After having wandered through several paths of the wood, I saw him in a retired place, looking at something he had drawn from his bosom.

He was so deeply absorbed that I went up to him unseen, and had time to look at what he held. Amazed, I recognized my own portrait. I then saw that so far from possessing that rest I had feared to disturb, he was, like me, the unhappy victim of a criminal passion. I saw an angry God laying on him an Almighty hand. I thought that this love which I had brought to the foot of the altar, had drawn down heavenly wrath upon him who inspired it. I came and knelt at the foot of that altar; I asked God to convert me, that I might obtain my lover's conversion. Yes, my God, it was for him I prayed; for him I wept; to save him that I came back to Thee. Thou hadst mercy on my weakness. My prayers, imperfect, profane though they were, still were not rejected. Thy grace descended in my heart. I felt the peace of a soul that is with Thee, and seeks but Thee. It was Thy will that I should be purified by suffering. A few days after this I fell ill. If the companion of my errors still suffers from the weight of sin, let him cast a look upon me. Let him consider what he has so madly loved; let him think of the terrible moment I am facing, and which he must soon face; of that day when the mercy of God will be hushed, and His justice alone will be heard! But I feel my last sacrifice at hand; I entreat these holy religious to assist me with their prayers; I request them to forgive me the scandal I have given them; and I confess myself unworthy to share their grave."

The voice of Adelaïde ceases — all is over; and De Comminge, silent till then — silent in love, pity, and despair — now rises from among the kneeling monks, and, clasping the corpse of his ill-fated mistress in his arms, gives way to passionate laments. The compassion, the Christian exhortations of the Father Abbot move him not. The love so true and so fatal of Adelaïde, her unsuspected presence, her long sufferings, and that sad death he has just witnessed, overwhelm him with a grief against which he will not contend.

"Have mercy on me," he says to the Abbot; "let me go; what would you do with a miserable wretch, whose despair would but disturb your peace?"

And, half in pity, half in fear of the scandal his further presence might cause, his request is complied with. He retires to a hermitage belonging to the monastery, there to lead a life of penance till the day of his death, which he promises

not to hasten. When that day comes he has the Abbot's promise that one grave shall re-unite him to his Adelaïde.

The incidents of this story belong to the common staple of romantic fiction. The style is not remarkable, though clear and easy; the delineation of character is cold; the progress of passion itself shows little power. The writer seems to have kept her whole strength in store for the death scene. This is impressive, pathetic, and full of an impassioned fervour unknown till then. How strong a hold it took of the public mind we may conjecture from the fact that its power is not yet exhausted; music, painting, and the drama have perpetuated the tale of Adelaïde's sorrows. Her death has become a sort of legend, which grave historians of La Trappe have indignantly denied, and which many who have never read the "Memoirs of Comminge" firmly believe to be true.

On its appearance this tale was immediately placed next the "Princesse de Clèves," and, when it had been before the public many years, La Harpe, after praising Madame de la Fayette, did not hesitate to say, "Only another woman succeeded, a century later, in painting with equal power the struggles of love and virtue."

And he was right. No love-story worthy of the name had appeared in France between these two tales. This is the fame which posterity awards to fiction. Every hundred years every language produces two or three novels that live for another century — sometimes for a little more. The rest, the countless multitude that had their day, are but their short-lived offspring, doomed to perish in their infancy.

The pathos and eloquence of Adelaïde's end have alone saved the "Memoirs of Comminge" from a like fate. The story has but one original feature, but that has ruled a considerable portion of modern literature, from Madame de Tencin's day to this; and even where it has not ruled, its influence has been felt. She opened the reign of passion, and opened it with a picture so moving, that change of taste has not yet affected its power. Many a penitent heroine have we had since then, from the first germs of sin down to the lowest. But Adelaïde first moved the hearts of readers; first she united — a dangerous union, as time showed — passion and religion.

Hitherto we have had a somewhat austere analysis of the female heart, or, in striking contrast, tales of open licentiousness, from which the very name of love was banished.

With Adelaïde, dying on the ashes of La Trappe — with the erring woman who repents not for her own sake, not, alas, for the love of Heaven, but because she trembles for her lover's salvation — the whole world of passion opens before us. Others may have drawn its progress with a hand more masterly; they may have told its tragic ending with more power and eloquence, but the germ, the dawn of a new vein in literature lies there. Madame de la Fayette first related with truth the delicate struggles of a virtuous heart; Madame de Tencin first told the drama of a love innocent in its birth, rendered guilty by adverse fate, and closing with the only end this world afforded, penitence and death.

Madame de Tencin's three other tales, "The Misfortunes of Love," the "Siege of Calais," and the "Anecdotes of the Reign of Edward III.," which she never finished, do not possess the pathos and depth of passion of the "Memoirs of Comminge." They also display a coarseness of subject from which it is free. Yet the "Misfortunes of Love" has many pleasing passages, and is interesting. But when she sat down to write it Madame de Tencin decreed that love should be unhappy and persecuted; and wherever we turn we meet the severe and inexorable face of a fresh sorrow, more bitter than the last.

Pauline, the heroine, is the daughter of a vain mother and of an unscrupulous financier. Their house is thronged with noblemen and titled ladies. They come, proud, insolent, and servile, to ridicule and plunder the low-born *roturiers*. The picture is drawn from life, from that struggle between birth and capital in which birth was to be so signally conquered, and which Madame de Tencin saw in all its early coarseness.

Without thinking it needful to consult her, her parents agree to marry Pauline to the young Duke of N—. To be a Duchess, to go to Court, and be allowed a tabouret in the Royal presence, whilst marchionesses stand around her, are, Pauline's mother assures her, all the requirements of a woman's happiness. Pauline is the more inclined to doubt this, that the Chevalier de Barbasan, young, accomplished, and amiable, but too poor to marry her, has secretly won her heart.

Spite her tears and a few timid remonstrances, she is introduced to the Duke of N—. His mother kindly does all the

wooing for him; he looks at his watch, at the clock, and is evidently distracted with the fear of being late for the play — or, more properly speaking, of not appearing in time adorned with a new coat, which is to charm every female heart, and to fill with envy every masculine bosom. At Pauline he does not condescend to look.

From this hateful union the young girl is delivered by her father's illness and death. In his last moments the penitent financier places a pocket-book in his daughter's hands, and charges her to appropriate its contents to various purposes of restitution; the rest is the best part of her inheritance.

And now come the misfortunes of love. The rich widow marries the Duke of N—, and enjoys the blissful tabouret; her daughter retires to a convent, and Barbasan fights a duel, kills his man, is taken, and expects sentence of death. His mistress contrives his escape, but the jailer's daughter usurps the merit of his flight, and renders him unfaithful. Pauline follows him, sees him with his mistress, who is called his wife, and returns to France heart-broken. At first she thinks of taking the veil; but a nun, her friend, sister Eugénie, dissuades her from the act. She tells her how she has made a convent her home, how she believed in the faithlessness of her lover, and married his friend, to be betrayed and disgraced; and yet strangely, though perhaps not untruly, she does not warn her against the peril of rash judgment. She does not say,

“Be not credulous like me. Who knows? Barbasan may not be married! Do not marry a man whom you do not love; do not tie yourself — be free!”

Far from it. Sœur Eugénie is no longer young. She has survived love and its sorrows, and thinks lightly of them both; but she has not survived that worldliness of the human heart which in the days of her youth filled her with such lofty scorn. She does not regret her lost lover, now her calm friend, who comes and sees her at the convent grating; but she regrets the comforts, enjoyments, and luxuries, and pleasures of life. Président d'Haqueville is an excellent match, and she pleads so hard in his favour, that Pauline becomes his wife.

Unavailing penitence soon comes; Barbasan was unfaithful, but he still loved his mistress. Jealousy and grief shorten the days of her husband, and her lover dies when she is free. Wearied of the world, Pauline retires to a convent, and Sister

Eugénie's friendship; her only solace to be the unknown and liberal benefactress of Barbasan's orphan child.

In this tale, as in all Madame de Tencin wrote, we find a restlessness, a fever, which seem to imply that love, passionate love, is the only business of life. This is her great characteristic. She tried to put in fiction that something which she had sought for and never found, or, finding it, which she had learned to be of brief and of little worth. Instead of placing the inevitable disappointment in the nature of the feeling itself, she put it in adverse circumstances and persistent sorrows. It may be that, in her worst moments, she had her own illusions about her past life; that she thought, if her youth had been differently cast, she would not have fallen quite so low, and might have been a better and a happier woman. Convents, fugitive heroines, and forsaken infants often appear in her tales, and in the episodes introduced. The memory of lost innocence, of love deceived or deceiving, of a deserted child, haunted her long — the penalty, the imperfect atonement of many errors.

CHAPTER XII

Madame Riccoboni.

WE know little of Madame Riccoboni's history. She was not rich or titled, to be courted by the eminent men of the day; her cotemporaries praised her, but without enthusiasm. We find her name in the literary annals of the eighteenth century; Grimm, Fréron, and La Harpe criticise or admire her works, but we meet with no personal records of her in the private letters or memoirs of that age to which the whole of her long life belonged.

Madame Riccoboni was essentially an authoress, and the celebrated and remarkable women of the eighteenth century in France were not the women who wrote. They who did write were not always remembered for their writings. Madame de Tencin is better known as the mother of D'Alembert, and for the scandal of her life, for her intrigues and the literary society over which she ruled, than even for the "Comte de Comminge." Madame du Chatelet's mathematical talents are forgotten, and she will go down to posterity with

the name of Voltaire; the wrath of Rousseau will avail more Madame d'Epinaïe than her own writings; in short, every admired or eminent woman of whom we read in the story of that time is linked with some great man's name, and on his merits, more than on her own, rests her title to our attention.

Madame Riccoboni's position was essentially different. Her errors and troubles were the errors and troubles of a woman; a woman was her only ardent friend; she knew and saw very little of the men of letters of the day; in short, she was nothing but a cold, unsuccessful actress, who became a writer; and the six octavo volumes of her works are all her claims on posterity. They were reprinted in 1818, twenty-six years after her death. As a quiet and polished reflex of the brilliant society of the eighteenth century, they were welcome; but since then they have gradually sunk into that half-oblivion, in which the name of the writer alone is saved from the wreck; whilst the pages over which so much fond labour was wasted — over which the young eyes of vanished readers pored and wept — remain closed and uncared for.

This is melancholy, but it is inevitable; we might as well bid the stream cease to flow, as try to avert the fate to which time must consign even very fine books. Genius alone, because it is the soul of humanity, is immortal; the rest is but flesh, and must perish, and go the way of all flesh.

The tales of Madame Riccoboni had not that strength of invention which saves novels, for a time at least, and gives them a lower and less fastidious class of readers than the first; but if she had not genius, she had more than mere talent. She had that subtle grace in feeling and style which gives many women a place of their own very difficult to define, and which springs partly from their nature and partly from their education. As Madame Riccoboni very justly observes in one of her stories: "Men are educated; women educate themselves; their heart is their teacher, a clever teacher, whose method is sure." This was especially true of the time when Madame Riccoboni lived, and it was very true of Madame Riccoboni herself, who owed so much to the early sorrows of her life.

Marie-Jeanne Laboras de Mézières was born in Paris in the year 1714. She belonged to a rich and noble family of the Béarn, which the famous system of Law reduced to comparative poverty. She received a good education, and having

early lost her parents she lived with one of her aunts, who allowed her more liberty than was wise in those profligate times. Mademoiselle de Mézières was very handsome. She had fine dark eyes, a lively and animated countenance, a fair complexion, and a good figure. She had beauty and wit enough to fascinate an English nobleman of high rank and great wealth, perhaps one of the friends and companions of Bolingbroke, like him a star in the Parisian world, but whose real name has not been transmitted to us.

Mademoiselle de Mézières pleased the English lord, as a handsome girl may please an unscrupulous man who does not think her high or rich enough to become his wife; he charmed and dazzled her as a first lover may charm a girl of eighteen, who believes that love must last a lifetime. The story of their mutual passion is recorded in the tale entitled "Letters of Mistriss Fanni Buttlerd to Milord Charles Alfred de Caitombridge Earl of Plisinté, Duke of Raffingth, written in 1735, translated from the English in 1756 by Adélaïde Varançai." These letters are those written by Marie de Mézières to her English lover. She published them in 1757, with very few alterations. Read in the original edition they bear every mark of genuineness. In the revised edition of her works we find that Lord Charles Alfred, &c., has simply become Lord Charles Alfred Earl of Erford, and that several letters have been added or altered. These letters and alterations are as evidently written *après coup*, as the first were spontaneous effusions. This new matter has a double purpose — it is literary and justificatory. A little familiar carelessness of style has been corrected; a few of the metaphysical dissertations fashionable in the year 1757 have been introduced, and sentences and entire letters, expressing trust or mistrust, as either may place the character of Fanni Buttlerd in a fairer light, have been inserted; but few of these changes really answer the purpose of the author. Whether we consider Fanni Buttlerd as a fictitious personage, or as another name for Marie de Mézières, she is a truer and a better woman in her first plain letters than in her improved ones. In the first she is very erring indeed, but she trusts entirely; in the second, she is all the more erring that she does not quite believe in Lord Charles Alfred. Her daring is no longer that of an inexperienced girl; it is the daring of a mature woman. This delicate though very obvious distinction seems to have

escaped Madame Riccoboni. She wished to heap coals of fire on the offender's head, by giving Fanni a sort of presentiment of her fate and forewarning him with reproaches, and she forgot that if Fanni saw and knew so well what was to happen, she was all the more to blame and the less to be pitied. But leaving this second Fanni, we will now deal with the first and her Lord Charles Alfred. The story is, as we have already said, that of Marie de Mézières and her lover, if story that can be called which simply tells the passion of an imprudent girl for an ungenerous man. Her love appears in the first pages: it is frank, sincere, and true; but a great deal too free in act and speech. Lord Charles does not promise marriage; perhaps he cannot, perhaps he will not; we are left in the dark. He promises, however, eternal love; and, though Fanni once doubtfully exclaims, "Ah! if you deceived me!" she hastily adds, fearful of offending him, "if you deceived yourself!" Though she does go so far as to doubt the future for a moment, it is a fugitive, timid doubt, which quickly vanishes and yields to entire trust. Voluntarily, and without much apparent seduction on her lover's part, she accepts the humiliating position of a woman who sacrifices all — honour, the world's esteem and her own, everything a woman holds dear — to a man who will sacrifice nothing to her.

When this difficult question is treated in works of fiction, the odium of the sin rests with the man. He is a betrayer, and the woman is a victim. The more to heighten our hatred of his villainy, and so raise our pity for her sorrows, her weakness is made to look so like innocence, that we may ask ourselves if she sinned.

In this there is neither truth nor real morality. Look as long as we like, we shall never find that innocence lies at the root of sin; we may add that weakness can never breed any feeling save contempt; but error, even deep and deliberate error, may waken, and justly so, the strongest compassion; and the more deliberate was the trust reposed in the man, the more flagrant and dishonourable in him is it to forsake the being who thus trusted.

We pity Fanni Buttlard, even when we blame her most. Her sins are all great mistakes; and mistakes for which she shall suffer long. The mist of youth and passion is on her eyes. She has faith in her lover, in herself, and in life. She reads, for the first time, a story we have read again and again,

and the fatal, inevitable end is hidden from her view. With the perversity of inexperience, and the wilfulness of youth and pride, she rushes on her fate. Living in an age of great profligacy, apparently unwatched and uncared for, influenced by evil counsel and bad example, she loses her modesty and her virtue; her letters often fail in delicacy; the acknowledgments of her love are too frequent and too free; and those errors are helped on by the virtue which education and the world check most in women — frankness; a virtue which was great in her.

An open, ingenuous heart and mind appear in every line Fanni Buttlerd traces. Art, coquetry, wile, she has none. She is so very free, because she is so very true; and because, being true, she loves and trusts infinitely: there lies the charm that makes us pity and forgive. We know that every word too fond will turn against her in an avenging day. When we see her glorying in her love, and all but worshipping her lover, we lament her folly. When she surrenders to her passion, and, by forfeiting esteem, thinks to secure fondness and fidelity, we marvel at her blindness; and both folly and blindness are so apparent, and their result is so certain, that the chastisement and the sin seem to walk hand in hand, and one to plead mercy for the other.

We have mentioned the blemishes that disfigure some letters of Fanni Buttlerd; they are great, but they cannot efface the charm which lively tenderness, perfect faith, and fond and open adoration spread over the rest.

What a sublime being that Lord Charles Alfred appeared to Marie! How handsome! — how noble! What generosity of heart and soul she finds in every line he traces! What a man! No wonder she is distracted when he is slightly unwell! No wonder that when waiting for him, her impatient eyes fixed on her watch, sitting in the chair he last occupied — no wonder that she murmurs at the servant who carefully dusted the powder left there by that handsome and beloved young head.

“Ah! leave me all that belongs to him!” she exclaims — she is writing to him about himself — “leave me all that can bring him back to my eyes and heart! Can I multiply those dear images too often! But I suffer, my dear Alfred, I suffer greatly. I have a dreadful headache; I am glad of it. I want a little mixture of good and evil to recall me to myself. I have

been so happy for the last six months, that my very happiness makes me feel uneasy. I consent to have it disturbed; but if it must be destroyed, I ask of Heaven that it may be by my death. I shall carry to the grave the sweet certainty of being loved by you; I shall keep it throughout all eternity; and when the terrible voice of the angel calls and wakens me, my first care shall be to seek for you in that immense valley. Wherever you may be, my place is near you!"

So wrote Fanni Buttlard, in the very tone of Adelaide of Lussan, and years before "Comminge" appeared. This, too, was a solitary outbreak of passion. None of Madame Riccoboni's other heroines ever spoke the same language: their love is often cold and bitter; they mistrust before they are deceived; anything like that passion or fervour never escapes from their prudent pen. But poor Fanni is not prudent. "Congratulate me, my dear lover," she writes to him — "I have a friend whom none can equal! Share my joy, my dear friend, I have a perfect lover!" No wonder if she sometimes feared that the friend and lover thus addressed, thus adored and flattered, might weary of so much happiness. "Alas! who knows!" she exclaims, with prophetic sorrow — "you will perhaps weary of this peaceful reign. If this quiet state fatigues you, leave it; but remember at least that a sovereign who abdicates, must neither despise nor ill-use the subjects whom he forsakes; that his goodness must spare them, and engrave in their memory love of his name and regret for his loss." Again she thus expresses the same tender fear: "Must I always speak of my happiness? I shall weary you, my dear Alfred; but do I not owe you all this joy? It is but a stream that goes back to its fountain-head."

Love-letters offer little variety, and Mistress Fanni is conscious that hers share the common fault; after praising her lover's letters, she exclaims: "I say I love you, and I repeat I love you; forgive me, my dear Alfred, but I really can think of nothing else." Imprudent words, imprudent acknowledgment! In vain she declares that the Princess to whom Alfred is paying his duty at Court envies her that charming Alfred in her heart; in vain she wishes her Alfred the empire of Titus, whose virtues he emulates; her sorrows begin with a separation, of which the guilt does not appear to rest with her lover. He really must go; he really must leave her, on some all-important public business. Fond and fervent letters follow

him. Fanni compares the agitated present with a peaceful past, which she does not regret. Formerly Milord, as she sometimes calls him, was not in town — he did not write, and yet she was happy; and now, because a sheet of paper is slow to come, she is wretched. The usual adoration follows, plenty of praise — too much, indeed — yet tempered by the declaration that her love is based on esteem and honour. That is indeed its redeeming virtue — it is not merely love, but worship.

The end is easily and quickly told. Lord Charles returns; he is cold, he is embarrassed; at length the bitter truth is confessed. He is obliged to marry another; but he solicits the continuance of Fanni's friendship and love. Fanni had lent an unwilling ear to the friendship, but the mention of love rouses all her indignation. She will neither divide affections which she once possessed entirely, nor wrong an innocent woman who has not injured her. After a bitter struggle between lingering passion and pride, she parts from her lover, and confesses her sad mistake. "You are not the man whom I loved," she exclaims, in her sorrow, "you are not, and, alas! you never were." Further on, she adds, in language temperate but sad: "You are going to break the ties that bound me to you. I am too proud to divide you, or fill up your leisure moments, and too just to wish to keep one who belongs to another. I resume those rights which my tenderness had given you over me. I promise you no friendship. I do not know what a torn and troubled heart may feel, but I do not think that a feeling so pure and so sweet as friendship can be born of a passion that only leaves behind the regret of having experienced it, the shame of having proved it too well, and the sorrow of having made an ingrate." Disdaining the accusation of yielding to resentment and wounded pride, and unable to invoke principles she had violated, she justifies what scarcely needs justification — the cessation of their intercourse — with the following adieu, in which the lingering wish of being not unkindly remembered is apparent: "You cannot doubt but that I tenderly loved you; be assured that I love you still, but time, the event that makes me take this grievous step, your absence, natural returns on the past, will perhaps restore me to myself, and procure me a peace I could not find in the degradation of a passion of which the sorrows alone would remain to me. Fare-

well, my lord, and believe that no one has more truly loved you than she who considers as a misfortune the hard necessity of loving you no more. And remember that if in my bitterest sorrows I could not conceal my tears from you, that if I sometimes made yours flow, I was at least considerate enough to put no bitterness in my complaining. Farewell, my lord, farewell for ever!"

This, we may be sure, was the last letter Marie de Mézières wrote. It has the marks of truth, the sorrow stronger than pride, the love surviving wrong, which are in human nature. Twenty-three years later, she added two last letters and a preface, whence all love had vanished, and breathing only the strongest spirit of resentment. Life and experience had, perhaps, taught her that she had been deliberately seduced and betrayed, and that she had sacrificed the peace and innocence of youth, not to a fond lover, even though a faithless one, but to a cold and calculating profligate.

Marie de Mézières was not twenty when she was thus forsaken. She was seventy-eight when she died, but she always remembered the wrongs of her youth and the sorrows of her first love. "It is not always the lover a woman regrets when compelled to cease to love," she wrote, in one of her tales, "it is the feeling, the charm, the joy of loving, joy so great that nothing can replace it." Thus, though all her tales are love-tales — though she has drawn, and with success, lovers both faithful and devoted, she has never forgotten her own story; and whatever turn the tale may take, the secret war which is ever going on between the two sexes, and never more than when love is at issue, finds in her an able and eloquent, though often severe, partisan. "One of the advantages of the superiority of man's soul over ours," she ironically declares, in "*M. de Cressy*," is "that strength of mind which he uses to stifle the remorse awakened in his heart by the memory of a feeling and unhappy woman."

Sometimes dropping irony, she appeals to the enemy's honour. "Question yourself!" she exclaims; "consult nature, truth, and say whether falsehood and treason can cease to deserve their names; say whether to deceive a woman is not to be a deceiver?"

To say the truth, this was not her general tone, and she preferred warning woman to appealing to man. There is eloquent and bitter truth, and a good warning, in the closing

remark which she puts in the mouth of Sophie de Vallière. This prudent young heroine, writing to a friend who wishes her to show more kindness to the man whom she, Sophie, loves in secret, justifies her coldness in the following words: "You say that the faults which owe their existence to love are easily forgiven. Though my experience is limited, I shall venture to assure you that this maxim is erroneous, so far, at least, as women are concerned. If the extreme violence of this passion excuses a sex whose education and natural boldness lead it to indulge its wishes, and sacrifice much to their gratification, reserve and moderation, the attributes of our sex, give it no claim to the same indulgence: *it is an unequal struggle, my dear, in which the more timid and the weaker of the two is bound to win the victory.*"

The case has seldom been stated more forcibly: woman is weak, and therefore she must be strong. She is weak, and therefore temptation must have no power over her mind or her heart.

Mademoiselle de Mézières had received a bitter lesson. It served her well. Wearied of poverty and dependence, she became an actress, and in the year 1734 she appeared on the Italian stage, in Marivaux's French play, "The Surprise of Love."

As an actress she was coldly received. She acted with propriety and judgment, but she was thought stiff, and wanting in vivacity. As a woman, and a young and handsome one, Mademoiselle de Mézières was soon surrounded with adorers, and exposed to many temptations; but trust was gone for ever, and pride could not brook a second fall, rendered more bitter by the consciousness of a judgment whose warnings she had not heeded. "I know not how others conceive that light called *esprit*," she wrote, many years later; "to me it appears like a bright taper, which a gust of wind has half extinguished. It glimmers faintly in the dark, and but half dispels it. Its feeble light suffices indeed to show us that we walk on the edge of a precipice, but does not let us see the slippery spot where our feet may fail. We fall, and when we have reached the very bottom, we can think over it, and say, still sore with the fall, that if we had only seen better we need not be here."

In 1735, Mademoiselle de Mézières married François Riccoboni, one of her brother actors, the son of an Italian actor

and actress who had settled in France, and both of whom were remarkable for their accomplishments. M. Riccoboni, the elder, was an author as well as an actor, and his wife was a linguist and a celebrated improvisatrice. She belonged to almost all the Italian academies; she wrote French plays that were not very successful; but, spite her failure as an author, she was long remembered as one of the most amiable and respected actresses of the French stage.

Their son, the husband of Mademoiselle de Mézières, was, like his wife, a cold and unsuccessful actor, but he wrote many popular plays, now almost entirely forgotten; and it was in his intercourse, and in that of the family she had entered, that Madame Riccoboni acquired her taste for literature. It was almost the only happiness her marriage gave her. Her husband's love cooled after a few years, and though she ever remained devotedly attached to him, his inconstancy saddened the whole of her married life. Once more she learned the bitter lesson, "that to be unhappy, and through what we love, is a misery which must be felt to be understood."

François Riccoboni thought so highly of his wife's judgment and taste, that he consulted her for all his works; he even re-wrote a little play which she had sketched, and published several of his own comedies under her name. In 1757, being then forty-three, Madame Riccoboni suddenly resolved on becoming an author herself. She had preserved, with the tenacious memory of a wronged woman, her letters to the English lord. Perhaps he was then in Paris, one of the many of his countrymen who yearly flooded the French capital; perhaps some circumstance, now lost and forgotten, by stinging Madame Riccoboni to the quick, made her resolve on giving him such a proof of her resentment as, without exposing him or her, would yet draw down public contempt on her wronger. Whatever her reasons may have been, she shaped her letters into a sort of story, and published them under the title of "Letters of Mistriss Fanni Buttlerd." The preface is headed, "Mistriss Fanni to one Reader," and that one reader is the original of Lord Charles Alfred.

It is to be regretted that any motives should have induced Madame Riccoboni to take a step so much opposed to the reserved and retired temper she naturally possessed, and of which her life gave such constant proof. Autobiographies

have their value. We know that they never are, and never ought to be, quite sincere — that is to say, that they must never tell the whole truth. But letters tell more than the truth: they tell every aspect it takes in a changing mind; they have the dangerous mutability of words spoken, and the terrible inexorable immutability of words written. There is no sadder reading than printed letters, for nothing written is so secret, so private. We may write a sonnet or an elegy for our own pleasure, yet somehow or other the sonnet may go forth to the world; an obliging and indiscreet friend may send the elegy to a magazine, and though the world may not be the better for either, and though we may not get much fame or profit for our poetry, still there is no unfitness in its having appeared. It is proper to suppose that sonnet and elegy were meant and fit to be read. But the letter, the sacred private letter, meant for one and given forth to all, to the amusement of the idle, to the curiosity of the vulgar, is a profanation which friends too often do not scruple at, but which we do not expect from the letter-writer.

Madame Riccoboni's scruples may have been lessened by a fact which we must not forget. She lived in the age of epistolary novels, when imaginary correspondents laid bare their most secret thoughts to the reader. Some French writers had already been successful in that artificial way of telling a story. It reached the acme of its popularity with Richardson's tales. The natural bent and ability which a young English printer had for writing letters, gave the law to the greatest geniuses of a neighbouring country. Even though Rousseau had not yet written his "*Nouvelle Héloïse*," Madame Riccoboni may have been tempted by the success which letters on every subject obtained. She may have thought that real love-letters had a chance of making their way, and of winning their author a position and a name. These, and the resentful motives we have suggested above, probably were her reasons for publishing the letters of Fanni Buttlerd.

The literary merit of these letters was great. They were written by a girl who did not then dream of authorship, yet the clear, graceful style that often rose to eloquence, the happy and ingenious thoughts in which they abounded, the felicitous way in which tenderness was expressed, were calculated to charm and avert attention. As a novel, "*Fanni Buttlerd*" failed; as a sketch, it was exquisite, and soon ranked high.

Fréron criticised it with some severity in his "Année Littéraire," but the public and Fréron often differed, and whilst he blamed readers praised.

Madame Riccoboni does not appear to have wished for celebrity under her own name, since she assumed that of Adelaide de Varançai, and with it the part of a translator; but the indiscretion of too zealous a friend betrayed her. She was already on terms of close intimacy with Mademoiselle Thérèse Biancolelli, a successful and accomplished actress, belonging to the same theatre with herself, and with whom Madame Riccoboni was to spend the last years of her life. The two friends were present in a literary assembly, where "Fanni Buttlerd" was warmly praised. Mademoiselle Biancolelli could not restrain her joy, and designating Madame Riccoboni, she triumphantly exclaimed, "She is the author!"

From this to the conclusion that Marie de Mézières and Fanni Buttlerd were one, the progress was rapid. Madame de Riccoboni denied nothing, but she is said to have burned some letters which she had suppressed.

In the following year she published "The History of the Marquis of Cressy," translated from the English by Madame de —. It was soon followed by "Juliette Catesby," the most pleasing and the most successful of her works. But it was not in Madame Riccoboni's power to forget her own story; here, too, we have a seduction, a false lover, and a betrayed woman. It is like "Fanni Buttlerd," an epistolary novel, and, as in her first tale, the author has laid the scene in England. Few foreign novel-writers would select England now, but a hundred years ago, if we may judge from the number of English tales written abroad, England must have been the true region of romance, the true world of interesting orphans, of secret marriages, of handsome villains and heroic lovers. The great school of the English novelists had done much towards this; besides, little was known of England, and therefore imagination felt at liberty. For these reasons, and also because, before the advent of the modern historical school of fiction, local and national truth was almost entirely disregarded, English tales enjoyed great popularity in France. There was a suggestive charm in the names of Molly and Bess, and Lord Charles Alfred or Milord Rivers were perfectly irresistible. Yielding to this feeling, Madame Riccoboni made her best tales English. "Juliette Catesby" was very

long a popular novel; it appeared about the time J. J. Rousseau published his letter on theatrical performances, addressed to D'Alembert. In that letter, Rousseau, alluding to Madame de Graffigny's "Cénie," had paid her a compliment at the expense of her sex. "It is not to one woman," he said, "but to women, that I deny the talents of men." Taking hold of these words, Fréron, in his review of "Juliette Catesby," concluded with the triumphant exclamation, "Ah, M. Rousseau de Genève, what will you say when you learn that the author is a woman!"

In the year 1761, a moderate pension from the Court enabled Madame Riccoboni to retire from the stage, which she had never liked. Her income, however, was insufficient, and she resumed her pen in the hope of adding to it. She wrote, in imitation of Addison, slight but graceful essays, which she collected under the title of "The Bee," and which, with her letter to Mrs. Thicknesse, have the merit of giving us some insight into her character and literary opinions. Concealing her name and sex, Madame Riccoboni informed the public that she was sincere, lively with her friends, cold to strangers, and stupid with those who bored her. Her motives for writing she did not choose to reveal.

"That difficult art," she added, "has become a common talent; everybody composes, and everybody's compositions are imparted to the public. One is ambitious of a dazzling reputation; another wants to turn into an income the chance thoughts he commits to paper; a feeling person — not daring perhaps to surrender to love — puts forth in a novel the feelings of his heart, and takes pleasure in seeing them shared by the sympathetic reader; the historian wishes to instruct, the wit to amuse, the philosopher to enlighten, the poet to delight and charm. What do all these pretensions lead to? The public rarely enters into the views of authors. It weighs, examines, compares, judges, according to its pleasure; decides according to its fancy; and often pronounces that the historian is untrue, the novelist insipid, the wit tame, the poet cold, the philosopher tiresome; and this much said, the world goes on as if no one had taken the trouble of writing."

In the same dispassionate spirit she wrote to Mrs. Thicknesse, who had asked to know some of the particulars of her

history, to be included in her "Lives of Celebrated French Ladies."

"The particulars of my life would form a very short and insipid article. My passage upon this globe can neither excite nor satisfy the curiosity of anybody. The narrow space which I occupy makes it difficult to perceive whether I inhabit it at all. Neither the world nor its amusements had ever any attractions for me. I have lived in a small circle, avoiding equally wits and fools. The desire to distinguish myself did not render me an author. My first works were anonymous; and those which appeared afterwards would have shared the same fate, if chance had not discovered my secret. The desire I had of leaving an unsuitable position, which even custom could never render endurable, and the hope of being able to procure, by my pen, a part of those comforts and conveniences I was about to deprive myself of, induced me to wish for the publication of my feeble productions. The indulgence they met with might have procured me an easy competency, if the tolerated piracy encouraged by the booksellers had not disturbed my plans. I have enriched some knaves, but have received little advantage myself from my literary labours. These disagreeable circumstances, added to my natural indolence, make me prefer employing myself in works of embroidery or tapestry, rather than hold a pen for the emolument of those people. I am grieved not to have an interesting history to tell you; but the life of a rational woman rarely offers facts worthy of attention. Mine has not been happy. My youth was spent in sorrow; but that may be the better for me. I sometimes hear persons in the decline of life make comparisons of the past and present time, recall to their minds former scenes, and complain of the present. For my part, I feel no regret on that account; my present condition appears to me the best which heaven in its goodness has been pleased to allot me. Independent and free, I have lived twenty-five years with a friend (Mademoiselle Biancolelli), whose sense, even temper, and amiable nature diffuse a continual comfort and delight on our society; and I enjoy the utmost tranquillity. We are strangers to the least disagreement, weariness, or uneasiness of any kind. The word *no* is banished between us; and as we are guided by the same principles, they naturally lead us to the same manner of thinking, so that perpetual harmony reigns in our little household. This

is all I am able to inform you of as to myself; and I doubt if, after my death, any more will be known of me."

Not much more is known, indeed; and, to Madame Riccoboni's honour, the truth of the above statement has never been doubted. Her long friendship for Thérèse Biancolelli has remained on record — a proof of the sincerity with which she practised the duties of a feeling she once explained so well. "Different from love, friendship is not fed by the errors of imagination. It wants to be kept up and animated; activity supports its delicate existence. Mild, even peaceful, it easily falls asleep; and when once it slumbers, it is hard to waken it again."

"Ernestine," an imitation of Fielding's "Amelia," "Miss Jenny," the "Countess of Sancerre," dedicated to Garrick, with whom Madame Riccoboni was acquainted since his journey to Paris in 1765 — a few plays, imitated from the English, and which proved unsuccessful on the French stage — the letters of Sophie de Vallière, those of Lord Rivers, a few romantic tales, "The History of Two Friends," her last work — were produced by her from 1758 to 1786, when she ceased writing, after being nearly thirty years an author. Like most of the women who wrote then, and like many who write still, she had been accused of assuming merit not her own. Palissot kindly put her in his "Dunciade" next to Madame du Bocage.

"Elle y viendra cette Riccoboni,
Qui n'a pas fait le Marquis de Cressy,
Qui n'a pas fait les Lettres de Fanny,
Qui n'a pas fait Juliette Catesby."

In a subsequent edition he acknowledges that Madame Riccoboni's works were her own indeed; but no one doubted it when he spoke, and the apology came too late to be meritorious.

It is sad to say that the piracies of foreign booksellers deprived this amiable and hard-working woman of the substantial fruits of her labour; and that, too, when she wanted them most — in old age. The French Revolution saddened her last years, deprived her of the little pension she had enjoyed till then, and left her almost destitute. She died on the 6th of December, 1792, in the seventy-ninth year of her age, tended to the last by her faithful friend, Thérèse Biancolelli.

And now what remains of that long life, stained but by

one deeply-repentant error, and adorned with many virtues; what is left of that delicate, ingenious mind, which delighted cotemporary readers? A few pages in biographical dictionaries, and six volumes, which few save the literary student, or the inquirer into the vanishing literature of the past age, care to open.

Some account of those tales of which, according to Grimm, the public exclaimed "*Ah! que c'est charmant!*" and for which posterity is so cold, will perhaps show us how Madame Riccoboni could charm the men and women of her own day.

CHAPTER XIII.

Madame Riccoboni's Tales.

THE faults and merits of Fanni Buttlerd are scarcely literary. Both spring from its truth. Madame Riccoboni gave the public a few pages taken from the book of her youth, and that successful experiment showed her that she possessed a power which she henceforth adapted to the purposes of fiction.

"The Marquis of Cressy," her next work, one of her best, but also of her least pleasing productions, proved her to be mistress in the difficult art of telling a story. She chose the narrative form, and we think that, had she always done so, her characters would have possessed a strength and depth in which they often fail. This short but tragic story shows us how rapid was the declivity down which fiction descended to that reign of turmoil and passion which we entered with Madame de Tencin. She was satisfied with a love delicate in its manifestations, though violent in its nature, and Fanni Buttlerd's love was both vehement and free; she thought it enough that a woman should die because her passion could not be gratified, and Madame de Cressy takes poison because the man she loves is faithless. This is one of the earliest interesting suicides in the modern French novel. Mademoiselle de Gournay's Alinda, though she wills her own death, dares not achieve it herself. What a change since the days of Clélia, when lovers risked life a thousand times for a look, a smile, a glove, a riband, but had not learnt to prize the relief of a bowl of poison. This was left to the villains of the

story, to murder and treason. The pure, the gentle, the good, died innocent as they had lived.

Another characteristic of this story is the hero. He is one of the first bad men made the leading person in a tale. The hero had been amiable, handsome, and true hitherto; Madame Riccoboni showed him to us shorn of the heroic attributes of honor and truth. She was not the first to do so, indeed, but she was one of the earliest. Madame de la Fayette's inconstant Duke of Guise is a very subordinate character. Mademoiselle de Scudéry's real heroes are all faithful. The Marquis of Cressy stands alone in the tale, a bold bad, and mercenary man; a real hero, yet brought before us not to be loved, admired, and imitated, but to be hated and despised.

He is well drawn, however, with all the vigour of a portrait. Handsome, fascinating, ambitious, and false, made to please and to deceive; brave, because to be a coward would be degradation; externally prudent and cold with women, because he wishes to marry splendidly; yet eager and impassioned in secret, because beauty and resistance charm him — he is a strange compound of daring wickedness and of shameful meanness. In this he does not belong to the heroic villain of a modern school. We sometimes pity the Marquis of Cressy — we never admire him.

Two good and beautiful women, who only see the fair outside which conceals so much villainy, fall in love with the Marquis of Cressy at the same time. Adelaide de Bugei is noble and poor; Madame du Raisel is a rich widow. The Marquis of Cressy only suspects the preference of the former. She is too poor for ambition, too lovely to be given up without regret. He plays with her affections until his own are somewhat involved. He hesitates, deliberates, and at length, conquered by her beauty, goodness, and love, he resolves to marry her.

Accident now reveals to him Madame du Raisel's affection, unsuspected till then. The splendour which surrounds this lady doubles her charms in M^r de Cressy's eyes, whilst Adelaide's are considerably weakened by her poverty. He really loves her less; but he still likes her well enough, now that she must not be his wife, to attempt making her his mistress; for, as the author sadly tells us, "respect ceases when love ends."

Adelaide, though imprudent, was pure. She flies with horror from her base lover, falls ill with grief, and on her recovery enters a convent. M. de Cressy takes this admirable opportunity of ingratiating himself with the good and artless Madame du Raisel. Pressed to tell the cause of the emotion he betrayed on hearing that Mademoiselle de Bugei was in danger, he confesses that a proud and silent passion for Madame du Raisel made him seek to correspond to Adelaide's affection; but that, on being put to the severe proof of marriage, he preferred being thought an ingrate to giving her a cold, unloving husband. Madame du Raisel is tender and credulous; she believes all, and forgives and marries the sinner.

Her beauty and tenderness secure her husband's love; for there is this weakness in this bad man, that he cannot help loving his victims. But in an evil hour she receives a young orphan girl under her roof. Hortense de Berneil is not handsome, but she is vain and wilful. She rallies M. de Cressy on Adelaide's passion. No man, she declares, could make her enter a convent — not even the most charming of his sex. M. de Cressy is piqued; he takes up the challenge; her resistance and her pride make Hortense lovely in his eyes. He spares no pains to please her, and succeeds. She becomes his mistress, or rather his tyrant. Weary of her hard yoke, he would fain turn back to his neglected wife; but it is too late. The truth has reached Madame de Cressy. She knows that she was married for money, that the husband whom she loved, and the orphan whom she befriended, have conspired to wrong her. For a few days she broods over her grief; then, unable to endure life, she takes poison and dies, forgiving the two offenders.

M. de Cressy lives on: a sad, unhappy man. Two images haunt him to his dying day: Adelaide immured in a convent through him; Madame du Raisel dying in his arms. "He was eminent; he was distinguished; he obtained every honour, every title he had wished for; he was high and wealthy; but he was not happy."

Thus ends the tale in which, with all his badness, M. de Cressy holds the first rank. His character is the story. In its mixture of good and evil, of strength and weakness, it is admirable. Its very littlenesses are genuine; and when we close

the book, we feel that we have seen a true man, perhaps the original of Lord Charles Alfred.

It was not in Madame Riccoboni's power to forget her own fate; and "Juliette Catesby," published the same year with "The Marquis de Cressy," is another tale of man's perfidy and woman's wrongs. It is an epistolary novel, and it takes Lady Juliette a great many letters to tell her story to her friend, Lady Harriet Compley. Yet it is slight and easily told. Lady Juliette — young, lovely, and admired — was left a widow at eighteen. A jealous husband has cured her of marriage, and a faithless mistress has cured Lord Ossery of love. They meet at Lord Ormond's house, and their resolves grow weak. If Lord Ossery had not taken so much time to make up his mind, all would have been well, and there would have been no story; but scarcely has he spoken, scarcely is their marriage agreed on, when he is obliged to take a journey which proves fatal to love. The error of a day, an error in which temptation had more part than infidelity, places him at the mercy of an injured girl, who threatens to commit suicide unless he saves her from disgrace. Honour bids him forsake Lady Catesby and marry Miss Jenny Montfort; he obeys her call, and without explanation, with nothing but passionate protestations of sorrow and love, he parts from his betrothed and marries her unloved rival. Two years later his wife dies; he is free to seek his injured mistress, explain the past, and be forgiven.

Such is the tale, but it is told differently. We are introduced to Lady Catesby, when, having met Lord Ossery after his wife's death, she flies from him, and refuses to hear his explanations. Her wrongs, and the bitter story of her past love, are developed slowly, and with much skill. The tale has that grace of language and detail which was Madame Riccoboni's excellence, and is often the attribute of minds deficient in invention. The difficulty of having much to say seems to make the necessity of saying that little gracefully all the more binding.

To fly from her penitent lover, Lady Catesby travels with a lady, and her brother, a Sir Henry —, who is in love with her, who is always dying for her, and who, to her vexation, "never does die." They go visiting from mansion to mansion; and her ladyship, who is not in a good temper, and who has a satirical pen, spares neither hosts nor guests. Sir John

Warthy and his wife find her pitiless. The husband is solemn, stiff, and stupid. Every word he utters is a foolish compliment, and his entertainment is like himself. He has been married six months, and his wife "is young, long, thin, pale, and foolish. With a sulky look, she puts forward a small head, that turns on a slender neck, and she laughs in your face, whilst her own offers no trace of mirth."

The ever-busy Lady Howard, who does not read lest she should hurt her eyesight, who forbids love and promotes marriage on her estates, is a more merciful sketch; but Lord Winchester and his guests rouse all Lady Catesby's taste for satire. Lord Winchester is the victim of the fine arts. "With plenty of voice he sings disagreeably; he dances awkwardly, though his steps are correct; he draws according to rule, paints little screens that are neither ugly nor handsome, and composes detestable verses with great facility. Every day sees the birth of a multitude of couplets and madrigals, where love, Venus, Hebe, and the whole Olympus are to be found *bon gré, mal gré* at the feet of the divinities of the house, and in which one takes on arriving the name bestowed by rhyme or measure."

After Lord Winchester comes the beautiful Countess of Bristol, "who is beautiful from morning till night, is always in the attitude of a woman sitting for her portrait, thinks of nothing but of looking beautiful, and is ever talking of the effect of beauty." And after her a young and extravagant baronet. "He is tall, a good figure, has beautiful hair, admirable teeth, plenty of wit, little sense, and much slang. He knows nothing, talks on every subject, lies impudently, is a connoisseur in dogs, horses, and jewels; despises everything, honestly admires himself, is ever deciding, wearies people of taste, is first among fools, and is thought here a delightful man."

Love fortunately comes in to stop this merciless pen. Lady Juliette can talk in other accents than those of satirical comment; when unveiling the past and disclosing the sorrows of her love, she does so with delicacy and tenderness. With infinite but subtle and evanescent grace she implies all that this love had of delightful at its dawn, of happy in its progress. How fondly, through all her wrath at having been betrayed, she dwells on the matchless grace, the courtesy, the tenderness of her false lover! How she lingers as she calls back that

happy summer spent in Lady Ormond's house and gardens! Slowly she paints the delightful hours when they studied and read together in the shady bowers of that earthly paradise. A love-tale at length unsealed their hearts, and their mutual vassation was confessed.

"Ah! what a moment!" she exclaims, pausing in her story. A charm unknown till then was shed over all I saw. That garden in which I had just learned that I was beloved seemed the abode of some beneficent being whose hand tore the veil that had concealed happiness from my view! Mute, full of amazement and joy, how could I have concealed emotions so rapid, and experienced for the first time? . . . Ah, why," she adds, a little farther on, "why does the frailty of our hearts and the inconstancy of our wishes turn to bitterness a feeling so delightful? Oh, when two beings love, each of whom has an equal power of bestowing on the other a happiness so great, so true, why must one weary, cease to feel, and surrender the other to eternal regret?"

Lady Catesby's regrets are not eternal. She forgives her erring lover, and she is the only one of Madame Riccoboni's betrayed heroines who can do so with honour. Hence a softness, a charm, which the bitter indignation of Fanni Buttlerd, and the calculating villainy of M. de Cressy, made impossible.

In her next tale, "Ernestine," which La Harpe called her gem, Madame Riccoboni chose two delightful characters, both frank, noble, generous, and true; both made to avenge love against society, and those laws of ambition and pride which had been so fatal to her own happiness.

M. de Clémengis has left his portrait to be copied at M. Duménil's, a miniature-painter. He calls for it, and finds a lovely, fair-haired, dark-eyed girl of sixteen engaged in finishing the copy. Recognizing in him the original, she coolly avails herself of his presence to perfect the likeness.

Her frankness, her vivacity, her calm innocence affect him; he inquires into her story; it is sad and short. Ernestine is the orphan child of an unknown mother. A kind French lady reared her, and, before her death, placed her with M. Duménil to learn miniature-painting. His health is failing, his sister Henriette, Ernestine's faithful friend, is away, and Madame Duménil, a light and unprincipled young woman, is the orphan girl's only guardian when the tale opens.

M. de Clémengis is seized with a sudden wish of learning

miniature-painting. M. Duménil is too ill to attend to him; the duty devolves on Ernestine. For once M. de Clémengis finds a woman who cares nothing for his title, his name, and his uncle the minister; who loves him, too, and he knows it — though she does not — with simple girlish affection. He, too, loves her, and yet he does not mean to marry her; his prejudices, his poverty, forbid the thought; but neither does he for a moment cherish unworthy designs. We may ask why he indulges himself in the dangerous delight of her presence; but when we find a marquis of the *ancien régime* with feelings so refined and so disinterested, we must not be too exacting.

M. Duménil dies, and his widow, bribed by the Marquis, fabricates a story of sudden wealth, in which Ernestine believes. The young girl is removed to a charming country-house; teachers impart to her every accomplishment; she exchanges her plain attire for elegant and fashionable apparel, and leads a free, happy, and delightful life.

M. de Clémengis sees his young and happy mistress in the home his secret generosity has provided. He sees her daily; every look, every word of the ingenuous girl betrays her secret affection; but this delicate lover takes no ungenerous advantage. Happy to be loved, happy to love, happy in her presence and society, he lets the present go by and gives the future no thought.

The same happy intimacy continues in Paris during the winter. But Ernestine suddenly meets her old friend, Mademoiselle Duménil, and the charm is broken. She learns that she passes for M. de Clémengis's mistress. Her tears, her protests, convince Henriette of her innocence, but not of the purity of M. de Clémengis's intentions. He is sent for, and confesses that he had none beyond making Ernestine happy. He is further than ever from making her his mistress, but no nearer than ever to making her his wife.

Up to this the story is delightful. There is something lovely, young, and ideal in that innocent passion which, without hope or thought of the future, binds an accomplished gentleman and a frank, innocent girl. No vision of marriage, nothing of the actual matter-of-fact side of human passion, comes to disturb that charming picture. They love, and never talk of love: one because she knows not even what passes in her own heart; the other because to see and hear the loved one is joy sufficient. If Ernestine had felt agitated in the presence

of her lover, if even that lover had found it a hard task to struggle against his passion, the charm of innocence would have vanished from their story.

Now that they are mutually enlightened, much of that charm departs. Mademoiselle Duménil thinks so highly of the Marquis that she allows Ernestine to keep his gifts, and receive occasional visits from him in the *parloir* of the convent to which she has retired; but ignorance has fled, and with her security and trust. Ernestine once had no wishes, no hopes, for she knew not that she loved. She knows it now, and that her love is hopeless. M. de Clémengis is miserable, he sees her seldom; why feed a passion which to both can bring nothing save sorrow? He could marry Ernestine indeed, brave his uncle's displeasure, the world's censure, and lose all for love. But he is not sure of his own heart. He has not tried poverty, he cannot tell how the inglorious inaction to which she condemned a gentleman of the *ancien régime* would suit his proud temper. He might be unhappy and embittered, and make Ernestine herself miserable. Reason, generosity, command him to forget her; but he cannot obey them entirely, and now comes the struggle of passion.

Ernestine receives M. de Clémengis's visits in the country-house she owes to his generosity, but her friend, Madame de Ranci, never leaves her. M. de Clémengis is irritated and offended. "Do you mistrust me?" he asks. "Ah! what coldness! what reserve! Your friendship is not so tender as it once was. Ah! where is the time, the happy time, when, in this very spot, you ran to meet me with a joy so true, when your arm leant on mine, and we wandered together through these alleys you liked so well?"

These reproaches, his altered looks, his feverish agitation, move and alarm Ernestine. She sees that the passion which once made him so calmly happy has become his torment. She writes to him, and her letter is very beautiful. It is a mixture of frankness, generosity, and girlish art, but the art of a fine nature. By throwing herself on the generosity of so romantic a lover, Ernestine knows well that she secures her honour. "Alas!" she says to him, "by what fatality does your happiness now seem to depend on the folly of a girl whom you formerly respected? Be judge in your own cause, in hers, too, and pronounce between your own heart and mine.

"My reserve wounds you! Ah, monsieur, can I treat you

with a familiarity which my ignorance excused? For a long time I ventured to look upon you as on a beloved brother. The extreme difference between your rank and mine did not strike me. In that happy time nothing checked the proofs of my innocent affection. I am not altered; ah, why will you persist in thinking that I am? It is not you I fear, monsieur, but myself. I am young, I owe you all, I love you. Yes, monsieur, I love you — I say, I repeat it with joy, I am not ashamed of loving you. . . .

"And now, I submit to your decision. If, to save your life, I must become contemptible, renounce my principles, my own esteem, and yours perhaps, speak — I do not hesitate between a stake so dear and all I can call mine. Decide, monsieur, on the fate of a girl ready to give up all to your happiness; but before you accept so great a sacrifice, allow me to restore your gifts: to keep and enjoy them would authorise the belief that you enriched me to ruin me. *Let us save at least your honour, and something of mine*; may the baseness of having received the price of my innocence never be imputed to me! On these conditions, monsieur, the unhappy Ernestine will follow the line of conduct your answer will prescribe."

Only a young, generous, imprudent girl could write such a letter — so noble, so reproachful in its very generosity, so youthful in its daring. And with this sad proof of love, which M. de Clémengis is too generous not to reject with grief at having ever suggested it, the tale should end. Here sacrificing birth and pride, he should either marry the noble girl who could remind him so pathetically of all that honour holds dear, or, bending beneath the yoke of the world, he should, still generous in his renunciation, turn from her, and leave to time and reason to heal the inevitable wound.

By prolonging the story, Madame Riccoboni has done much to spoil it.

Conscious that he has tried her love and his own virtue too far, M. de Clémengis comes no more. He submits to his uncle's wishes, and prepares to marry his long-destined though unknown bride; but the uncle is exiled — the match is broken off. M. de Clémengis falls ill, and Ernestine flies to his sick bed. Love prevails over prejudice and pride; and the gain of a pending lawsuit, the restoration to royal favour of his uncle, do not affect his resolve. The world may say what it pleases, Ernestine becomes Marquise de Clémengis. No doubt we are

pleased it should be thus. Let love always be blest in books; but in a tale where the interest lay not in incident, but in the struggle to which passion, temptation, and pride exposed two fine natures, that struggle could not remain too much the centre of all attention. When we cease to wonder what M. de Clémengis will do, or Ernestine sacrifice, we lose some of our interest in either. Incidents only divert us from one of the most charming groups Madame Riccoboni ever drew.

She excelled in such pictures: in love happy or forsaken; in honour and generous faith prevailing over looseness. She was not successful in wider flights; and her two longest stories, "Miss Jenny" and "Sophie de Vallière," are the weakest she wrote. Yet both possess, pre-eminently, that meaning which pervaded all her works — the sorrows of woman. As a girl, seduced and betrayed; as a wife, neglected and unloved; as an actress, sought for her beauty with insulting homage; sneered at as a writer, till she conquered success, but wronged till she wearied of her honourable attempt to earn a livelihood — she knew better than any how hard a lot that of a woman without friends or money can be made by man.

Her resentment of the injury did not take the shape of foresight. She seems to have known of no remedy save more justice, virtue, and self-denial in man's bearing to woman. With pitiless but useless logic she protested against the wrong; with unwearied zeal she warned women against that voice of flattery and passion which had been the ruin of her youth. "Miss Jenny," which she took three years to write, is, from the melancholy birth of the heroine to the sacrifice of her happiness — with which the tale closes — ere she reaches her twentieth year, an instance of almost every sorrow that can befall her sex. She is an orphan, disowned and penniless. She marries the man she does not love, and he has another wife living; and she is obliged to fly from the man she loves, for he is betrothed to her friend.

The false marriage was a favourite incident when Madame Riccoboni wrote. It has been exhausted since then; and even bigamy, the crime of modern days, has been considered out of place in fiction. There is, perhaps, something too harrowing and too sad in that trap laid by profligacy to virtue and innocence. Its success is what condemns it. We hate the triumph

of the false, the evil, and the corrupt; we want to feel the earth secure and firm beneath the feet of the good. Let every sorrow darken around them, but let not the sting reach their very heart, and evil might conquer them in their last stronghold.

Melancholy, and often tragic, are the incidents recorded in this tale, in its episodes, and in the letters of Sophie de Vallière, or of the Countess of Sancerre. But the more she had to say, to enter life and its depths, and the less Madame Riccoboni was successful. The slight, gay, graceful passages in these tales are by far the best. There is a scene in "Sophie de Vallière" which is very good. Sophie reaches her seventeenth year without suspecting that she is not the niece of Madame d'Auterive. That lady dies, and the family assembles to hear the reading of the will. The supposed niece and heiress, the flattered and caressed mistress of future wealth, is surrounded by her affectionate relatives. What sympathy, what tenderness, is shewn by cousins and aunts! The haughty Madame de Germeuil, who has long courted the hand of Sophie for her son, is particularly attentive. But, alas! instead of the will is found a packet of letters and papers, which disclose Sophie's real history. Madame de Germeuil is horrified; the whole family is indignant and injured, and withdraws from the little impostor. True, she is no heiress; true, this stranger will not deprive them of their due; but can they forget that for seventeen years they have been her servile flatterers? Can they forget the secret jealousy, the degrading meannesses, which the foolish fondness of her protectress inflicted? They cannot; and now that their hour is come, they avenge, in one moment of triumph and insult, the baseness of a lifetime. Sophie faints with dismay and grief, and Madame de Germeuil has a violent quarrel with the other heirs.

Madame Riccoboni wrote till within a few years of her death. Her last works prove some decay of power, and an unfortunate imitation of bad models. Yet, as an imitator, Madame Riccoboni ranks high. Sainte-Foix maintained in her presence that Marivaux's style was inimitable; she supported the contrary opinion, and amused herself with continuing Marivaux's never-finished "Marianne." A manuscript, said to have been stolen from Marivaux, was read to Sainte-Foix. He was completely deceived; and well he might. The imitation is perfect, and shows wonderful tact and *finesse*. Madame Riccoboni called this a folly of her youth. It is a

graceful *jeu d'esprit*, but, unfortunately, leaves "Marianne" as unfinished as ever.

The letters of Lord Rivers is the last production of this agreeable writer we shall examine. As a delicate though slight critique of cotemporary foibles and illusions, these letters are charming. The story is but a thread, on which the author's opinions are strung.

A young and lovely ward, a handsome guardian, and officious friends, are the *dramatis personæ*. Lord Rivers, after being humbled by one haughty beauty, and deceived by another, finds a soothing charm in the society of his ward, Miss Rutland. Honour forbids him to yield to his feelings, for before he was conscious that she was the very person who ought to become Lady Rivers, he had advocated the claims of his friend, Sir Edmund —. Pique at his coldness makes her encourage this suitor, whom love will not let her marry. Hence the endless caprices of her whom Lord Rivers defines as "this pretty, strange, incomprehensible creature, whose real character escapes one just as one thinks to lay hold of it."

Lord Rivers has indeed some suspicion that he is the cause of her caprices, but he is too dull and shy to act on the suspicion; he keeps away until the plainer revelations of a mutual friend bring him, penitent and happy, to the feet of his fair mistress.

Out of this slight tale Mrs. Inchbald seems to have extracted the first part of her "Simple Story," in which she put as much passion as Madame Riccoboni put little.

Lord Rivers's remarks on France, her people, and her manners, are more entertaining than his cold love for Miss Rutland. He finds philanthropy all the rage, and that love of mankind, of which the French Revolution was the sanguinary close, in all its fervour. With this universal tenderness Lord Rivers quarrels. To love all men, he sceptically declares, means to love none; and under the name of Sir Henry Montford, his uncle, he sketches the father of the famous Mirabeau, that *ami des hommes*, who drove his wife from his home, insulted her children and his by the presence of his mistress in his own house, and by his brutal tyranny did much to exasperate and corrupt a son who, with all his vices, was infinitely above his philanthropic father. To cotemporaries the portrait must have appeared a very mild one.

"One evening his cries and a terrible noise made me run to his study. I saw him, his cane in his hand, chasing a very pretty negro boy, whose gentleness and innocence had endeared him to me. I saved the child from his master's fury, and asked to know the crime that drew down on him this heavy chastisement. He had involuntarily spilt a little water on the papers of the indefatigable writer! 'And what did these precious papers treat of?' I inquired of my irritated relative. 'They treat of the happiness of a portion of mankind,' he answered, warmly; 'it is the work of my feelings, the favourite work of my heart, dictated by the tenderest humanity; in that work I demonstrate the cruelty of our planters, the injustice of Europeans, who, not satisfied with encouraging an infamous traffic, with profiting by it, assume the barbarous right of ill-using unfortunate slaves whose labours enrich them. Full of compassion for these unfortunate negroes——'

"'If I were you, uncle,' I interrupted, 'I would begin by proving my pity in not ill-using the only negro whose fate is dependent upon me.'

"You will never value this advice so highly as did the protector of the blacks. He deprived me of fifteen thousand pounds sterling, which he was to leave me at his death, and gave them to my sister. If he thought to punish me he was greatly mistaken."

If Lord Rivers was thus disgusted with mock philanthropists, one of his correspondents, Lady Cardigan, was no less offended with the lachrymose tone of cotemporary authors.

"I have long been weary of our *very feeling* novelists," writes this lady. "They want to move, to agitate, to excite cries and lamentations. They invent pitiful misfortunes, they press, they accumulate them on a wretched hero. They load him with them, and they succeed in revolting, without having found the way to interest us.

"But what will lead me, I believe, to cease reading for ever, is the mania common to writers of every sort and nation — it is that rage for virtue which excites in them transports bordering on madness. What! cannot they write ten lines without exclaiming, oh, goodness! oh, charity! oh, humanity! oh, virtue!"

More particular in its kind is Lord Rivers's account of the

thinking mania which had then seized France, a mania of which Madame Riccoboni did not attack the substance, but the affectation. It was in the seventeenth century that France really thought, but in the loose, profligate, cynical eighteenth century she talked about thinking. It was the froth and foam, too often impure, of the broad stream which had flowed so majestic and so deep in the age of Pascal and Bossuet.

"The French are now as dull and as heavy as we are," writes Lord Rivers, to Sir Charles Cardigan. "They are thinkers, politicians, and reasoners. Agriculture, legislation, and philosophy are the subjects of discourse in the most polished circles. Every one projects, lays down principles, and forms plans for administration. Women even take up these grave matters. Party spirit slips in at the toilet, and mixes in every pleasure. A young beauty chooses and protects a political system, prescribes the rest, argues, and sometimes loses her temper. Every circle has its views, its ideas, and plans. Woe to the peaceable citizen who remains neuter, listens, and holds his peace. Everywhere he is deafened with noise, nowhere is he esteemed.

"Depth has become the mania of a people formerly inspired by the graces and guided by pleasure. The sort of dissipation to which you invite me to yield, and which you think calculated to charm *ennui* away, exists no more. The theatres are very sad, I assure you; there is weeping in every house. Enveloped in gloomy veils, Thalia has put by her smiling mask. The brightness of mirth is hated here; it is the lot of the people and of foolish youth. Feeling — *extreme feeling* — is the universal mania, and our darkest subjects are scarcely considered grave enough for burlesque operas."

And here we end with Madame Riccoboni. She belonged to a school which shows no symptoms of reviving; the calm, the correct, and somewhat cold school of graceful writing and true though limited observation. Her tales can still be read with pleasure and profit. There is indelicacy in "Fanni Buttlerd," and even her most moral stories are not free from much that would never have been written by Madame de la Fayette or Mademoiselle de Scudéry. But it was the taint of the age, not want of modesty or refinement, that made Madame Riccoboni occasionally fall into those errors. Her mind was naturally noble and pure, and like it was her teaching. In

"Fanni Buttlerd" alone there is a deliberate want of innocence and principle, and only the coarseness of contemporary literature can have induced Madame Riccoboni to publish it, and made her overlook its deficiencies.

In a literary point of view Madame Riccoboni still ranks high. She had not genius, she had not that magic of a fine style which can make novels survive the changes of fashion; but she had many gifts and a place of her own. She was more natural than Marivaux, more delicate than Prévost, and she stands between them, popular and admired in her own day, honourably remembered in ours.

Her influence was delightful and beneficial, and success rewarded the efforts of this thoroughly conscientious writer. No tale ever left her hands until her power to improve was exhausted. She wrote slowly and with care; her style was lively and delicate — graceful and ingenious thoughts flowed freely from her pen; her stories were well told and interesting; her characters failed in depth, but they had truth and clearness. They are still very definite persons — too perfect, too judicious sometimes, but yet real and living. Her women especially are excellently drawn; without the aid of graphic description, without telling us the height of their figure or the colour of their hair, she gives them an air of beauty, elegance, and breeding we cannot easily forget. They are all ladies — if not in birth, at least in feeling — from that too vehement and too frank Fanni, the betrayed mistress of Lord Charles, to the generous Ernestine, so tenderly loved by that truest of lovers, M. de Clémengis.

What affinity was there between those graceful creatures, so polite, so refined, so accomplished, and the Marquises and Comtesses whom Marie de Mézières met in her youth as an equal, and as an actress afterwards represented on the stage? Alas, not much! She took the graceful wit, the charming manners, the lovely form, and she poured within a purer spirit and a nobler soul than the reality can have afforded to her penetrating view.

What matter? The writers of memoirs and autobiographies have shown us more than was needed of the other side of the picture. Impurity, coarseness, profligacy, under its worst aspect, have been unveiled with a freedom that seemed meant to reconcile future generations to their own vices. It was well, therefore, that a delicate pen should idealize this

amentable history; that readers should share the sorrows and pride of Lady Juliette, and linger with her over the first joys of her happy love in the Lady Ormond's gardens; it was right that the noble imprudence of Ernestine, the sensitive reserve of Sophie de Vallière, the vivacity and haughtiness of Miss Rutland, should point to other shades in the female character than those which require merciful oblivion. And though Madame Riccoboni was less successful and less lenient with her men — though she showed herself either too severe, or, when she chose to be indulgent, somewhat less discriminating than in her portraiture of women — still some of her lovers, alternately impassioned, selfish, and devoted, and, whatever they are, always courteous, well-bred, polished French noblemen of the last age, are worthy of attention. Like her women, they leave us an impression of a refinement monotonous, perhaps, but intellectual and delicate, which has perished in revolutionary tempests, or vanished in the struggles of active and political life. Her tales have not that neatness, her characters that point and epigram, which gave Marmontel such amazing success in his day; but her sketches of society are more valuable than his, and give a truer reflex of that delightful society which Madame de Genlis so indignantly declared that Marmontel slandered instead of painting.

Her good taste, and that intuitive knowledge of manners which guides a woman so much more safely than man through the minutiae of life, and which, even when her mind and education are inferior to his, saves her from so many errors into which he falls, did not allow Madame Riccoboni to draw those amazing chevaliers and insolent beauties with which this prolific and popular author adorned his tales. Truer and more delicate, but less lively than the cotemporary authors of that age, she never sacrificed to effect, and indulged herself in a simplicity which, though ever delightful to a correct taste, is, as a matter of literary speculation, safe only to genius. It is to Madame Riccoboni's honour that to such speculation she would not stoop, and kept her dignity and her self-respect pure and free.

CHAPTER XIV.

Madame de Genlis.

THE name of Madame de Staël alone enjoyed a more European celebrity than that of Madame de Genlis at the close of the eighteenth century. This age has drawn between the two writers that broad and deep distinction which must ever exist between talent and genius; but this was by no means so universally acknowledged, nor yet so evident a truth, when both wrote — one in the maturity of experience, the other in the glow of youth and inspiration.

The superiority of Madame de Staël was at length recognized; injudicious comparison was no longer made between women whom nature had never intended to be rivals; but a charm remained with the name of Madame de Genlis, a fascination to which Madame de Staël could lay no claim. One had written for youth, for the happy and joyous years when books are a passion, and a new tale is an event. The respect, the reverence, and the love of a generation long guarded her against forgetfulness and reproach. Mild, grave, and pleasing, a moral and lady-like instructor, she long appeared to those who, having learned to love her in their childhood, could not at once unlearn the lesson, and reject the formerly welcome teaching. But truth is inexorable. Whether she merited it or not, it became apparent that this favourite writer had not left a stainless reputation. History showed a Madame de Genlis who was not merely the governess of Princes and the teacher of youth, but a gay, lively, and very handsome woman of fashion, fond of pleasure, fond of admiration, suspected of a doubtful connexion with that unhappy Prince who afterwards bore the name of Philippe Egalité, and who, whether slander wronged her or not, was certainly one of the most witty, agreeable, and accomplished women of her time, and also, on her own confession, one of the least decorous.

Under these two very different aspects, as an admirable educator, or as the profligate mistress of a corrupt Prince, Madame de Genlis now seems condemned to appear for ever — innocent or guilty, such is her fate. As an author, she has a wide-spread name, but who reads her books? And yet she



wrote with taste and elegance. Charming and ingenious thoughts are scattered throughout her pages with graceful profusion. She wrote novels that had great success in their day, novels of passion, by no means written for youth, and which are eminent for some of the first qualities of fiction; strong character, knowledge of the world, of the human heart, interest and invention. To those who read again those charming pages, scarcely now and then disfigured by the extreme sensibility of the age, it seems unaccountable that such a book as "Rash Vows," for instance, should be forgotten. And yet there is good and logical reason for it. We have already said that Madame de Genlis has two characters: one good, as the teacher of youth; one bad, as the mistress of a Prince; it is unfortunately true that her good character has injured her literary reputation. No one would venture to say that a badly-conducted woman could not write admirable works of fiction; but few would dispute that sweeping judgment of superficial readers, that it is impossible for a governess, and the writer of moral works destined for the young, to write anything but a dull novel. Until her books on education and for children are forgotten, Madame de Genlis can have no justice as a novelist; and by that time, alas! where will she — where will some of the brightest of her successors be? Going down the stream of that envious flood of oblivion, which daily bears away from earth and her shores the hopes, the ambition, the painful labours of past generations.

Mademoiselle de Saint Aubin was born at Champceri, near Antun, in Burgundy, on the 25th of January, 1746. Her parents were noble; her father's name was Ducrest, but when his daughter was still a child he bought the Marquisate of Saint Aubin, and as was then customary amongst the French *noblesse*, he assumed the name and title of his estate. His daughter became Countess of Bourbon Lancy in the following manner. The Marquis of Saint Aubin was also Seigneur of the village of Bourbon Lancy; he caused his little girl, then six years of age, to be received a Canoness in the Chapter of Aix, near Lyons, and thus secured to her the title of Countess, the right of being called Madame, and the prospect of a safe and honourable home; if, not being very rich, though of noble birth, she could not marry suitably to her rank. This foresight was not unjustified by the event. The château of Saint Aubin was half a ruin, a real Radcliffian

abode, with stately courts and crumbling towers, which their owner could not afford to keep in repair. In this ancient mansion Stéphanie received a half-pious, half-heathen education. Her governess was devout, ignorant, and a good musician. Her mother was literary; she wrote some novels, now forgotten, and she liked private theatricals. Mademoiselle de Mars helped to develop that remarkable talent for music which always distinguished Madame de Genlis, and Madame de Saint Aubin cultivated that taste for acting for which her daughter was also eminent. She was a pretty child, and the part and costume of Love were found to suit her charmingly. She appeared in a pink skirt, covered with lace and flowers, and reaching to the knee, buskins of pale yellow and silver, flowing hair, and a pair of blue wings. Madame de Saint Aubin was so pleased with this attire, that she would not let the child leave it off. Accordingly, several suits were made for Love — a plain one for week-days, and a handsome one for Sundays — and Mademoiselle de Saint Aubin went out, and walked in her pink skirt, with her blue wings, and quiver, bow and arrows, like any little heathen god. But one concession was made to decorum — Stéphanie's wings were taken off, and a loose cloak was thrown over her childish person, when she accompanied her mother to the parish church. Whilst Mademoiselle de Mars, the governess, taught her pupil music and religion — and she appears to have been a sincerely pious and amiable person — and Madame de Saint Aubin showed her how to use and prize beauty, Monsieur de Saint Aubin, who was something of a *savant*, and had his own fancies on education, did his best to make his daughter a strong-minded woman. She had a natural horror of insects — he accordingly compelled her to handle spiders and toads, and having taught her this self-subjection, he remained satisfied.

Through all this contradictory teaching the child's instincts made out their own way. She read Mademoiselle de Scudéry's "Clélie," and, not knowing how to write, dictated novels and comedies to her governess; but, most characteristic of all, she turned teacher herself, and, escaping from her room by her window — a rope helped her to slide down to a terrace — she gathered below a school of peasant boys, and taught them their catechism, and such fragments of verse as her tenacious memory had caught.

Before she was thirteen, an abrupt end was put to this



desultory education. The estate of Saint Aubin was sold — the Marquis, once more plain M. Ducrest, went off to the colonies, there to begin life anew — and Madame Ducrest and her daughter, reduced to an income of twelve hundred francs a year, went to Paris, where they saw good company, but lived in a very humble way.

Their new circumstances were not favourable to dignity. Mademoiselle Ducrest was lively, pretty, and poor; she was taught to make every use of her natural advantages, and especially to please the rich. The task was easy enough to an amiable and pliant girl. Her musical talent was of the highest order; she cultivated it with creditable energy and perseverance. Kind friends assisted her studies. After her father's departure, her mother became, for some time, the guest of M. de la Popelinière, near Paris. He was one of the wealthiest and most generous financiers of the day. Mademoiselle Ducrest was soon far in his good graces. He had her taught music, declamation, and dancing, and he sighed to think that he was sixty-six, and that this pretty creature, with luxuriant brown hair, fine black eyes, a nose like Roxelane's, and a most piquant face, was only thirteen. "Quel dommage!" he often said aloud; and Stéphanie, who admired him, who was grateful for his kindness, and not indifferent to his wealth, also thought, though she did not say so, "Quel dommage!"

His house was not the only one in which Mademoiselle Ducrest displayed her charms and her talents. She had acquired considerable skill on the harp, then a fashionable instrument, and which few excelled in; she sang well; she was an excellent actress; she danced admirably; and, whatever she did, was grateful to ear or eye. She does not acknowledge the fact in her memoirs, but it is asserted that her exertions were liberally remunerated by the wealthy friends whom she and her mother visited. She got several offers of marriage, but either the lover was too old and morose, or he was not sufficiently rich and well-born — for she acknowledges that she was ambitious; and she had reached her seventeenth year before she became the wife of M. de Genlis, a younger brother, but the nephew of a minister, and on the way to those honours and places to which every clever French nobleman could then aspire.

M. Ducrest was returning from the French colony of Saint
French Women of Letters.

Domingue, when the English captured the vessel in which he was a passenger. In the English town to which he was taken, he found a young French naval officer, a prisoner like himself, with whom he soon became intimate. He showed him his daughter's portrait, and the letters of his wife full of that daughter's praises. M. de Genlis was fascinated, and, like Colonel Hutchinson, he fell in love with an unknown mistress. No sooner did he win his liberty, and reach Paris, than he called on his friend's wife and daughter. Mademoiselle Ducrest was too pretty and too amiable not to keep the heart she had already won. M. de Genlis was twenty-seven; his father and mother were long dead; but, though he was legally free, his family was ambitious and powerful; he did not venture to declare his intentions openly — he married Mademoiselle Ducrest, at midnight, in the church of her parish, and the next day he acknowledged his marriage, and was forbidden to appear before his incensed relatives. Their resentment lasted years; yet the end proved that ambition had not deceived Mademoiselle Ducrest; and though her husband had only a few thousand livres income, that sum was then a competency, and, joined to his rank and the protection of his family, would have easily procured M. de Genlis a noble and well-portioned wife, had not love proved stronger than prudence.

Madame de Genlis says little of her husband; that little is to his advantage, but gives no clue to her own feelings. She probably found in him a husband who gratified her two strong passions — vanity and ambition. Had she been merely ambitious, she would have accepted Baron d'Andlau's offer. He was old, rich, and so noble that, as an irresistible preface to his addresses, he sent her his pedigree to examine: but she found him too old and too austere, and the Baron, offended at her want of taste, ultimately married her mother; for though M. Ducrest returned to France, he did not live to see his daughter become the wife of his young friend. M. de Genlis, on the contrary, was noble, young, and handsome; he was brave, agreeable, and clever; in short, such a man as a girl of seventeen, poor and pretty, might be proud to subdue, and might marry without love. Nothing like tenderness ever pierces through her language when speaking of him; and, on her own confession, vanity, and a wish for admiration, were almost the only mobiles of all her actions. She practised

twelve hours a day to become a great musician, and be known as such; she performed daring actions to be thought courageous; she swallowed a live fish to prove that she was not dainty; she rode off alone in a wood, and purposely lost her way, to meet with strange adventures, and, we suspect, to distract her friends with apprehensions. She seems to have been pursued throughout with an unquiet wish for celebrity and singularity, that took the strangest forms — less strange then, it is true, than they would be now. Once she and her mother dressed like peasant women, and went off to a country wedding, and danced with the peasants. Another time, the *Bal des Porcherons*, in Paris, was the resort she and her friends chose for pleasure; and there Madame de Genlis had the honour of being partner to M. de Brancas's runner.

When her husband joined his regiment, and left her in a convent, soon after their marriage, the young bride could devise no better amusement in this sacred retreat than to enter the cells of the aged nuns and rouge and patch them for matins. Youth, indeed, is the season when levity has most claim on indulgence; but then it must offer something more than a cold heart and a restless brain for its follies to be forgiven. It is the heroic time of life; the time for generous hopes and aims, for self-forgetfulness and general charity; and, imperfect though its deeds ever are, it is so sincere, so genuine, that severity rarely visits its shortcomings.

But this forgiveness is granted on one condition — youth must not be selfish. Madame de Genlis was amiable, but she was not generous, in the broad sense of the word. The ardour of her youth was essentially self-seeking. She was fond of talking alone, of throwing herself into imaginary perils and adventures, and of fashioning herself a life more picturesque than the real one. Imagination can, indeed, find her delight in such fancies, and youth will always have them, whether dreamt or spoken; but it is strange friendship that finds it pleasanter to hold imaginary intercourse than to exchange thought and feeling in real speech and presence with a loved friend. "What real friend," frankly asks Madame de Genlis, "could enter into our feelings, love and understand us so well, as the one whom one causes to speak — oneself?" None, assuredly; but other dreamers have fancied that friendship, that every human affection, was meant to give as well as to receive, and that it was almost sweeter to love than to be

loved. This active mind had, however, its favourable aspect. Madame de Genlis's musical education was attended to; but though her mother was an authoress, she was left in great literary ignorance, and the large amount of information on every subject which she acquired she owed to her own industry. She read and studied prodigiously. Nothing came amiss to her, not even bleeding and anatomy; though she would not study this, it is true, on real corpses, but on the wax figures which Mademoiselle Biron, her teacher, had for that purpose.

She had always had much taste for theatrical amusements. She was ingenious in contriving *fêtes* and *divertissements*, in writing complimentary poetry, and in all those *talents de société* which then made men and women popular. She could dance as a shepherdess, sing as a Roxelane, and act a ready and graceful part in all the childish, and often *impromptu* contrivances which formed the delight of an idle and decaying aristocracy. The birth of her children, the interest she took in their education, and the pleasure she found in making them excel in her favourite pursuits, suggested her first work, "Le Théâtre d'Education." It appeared whilst she was in the Palais Royal; for as early as the year 1770, Madame de Genlis had taken a step that influenced her whole life. She had become a member of the gay little Court of the Orléans family, and was attached to the person of the young Duchess of Chartres, one of whose dearest friends she soon became.

The Palais Royal was then in all its splendour and gaiety. The Duke of Orléans, who had privately married Madame de Genlis's aunt, the Marchioness of Montesson, was old, but fond of pleasure; his son, the Duke of Chartres, was devoted to it, and the young Duchess, though a princess of undoubted virtue and piety, did not lead a retired life. The whole family adopted a policy, traditionary in their race, of opposing a popular and affable bearing to the formality of Versailles.

The literary turn of Madame de Genlis would have met with little favour in the circle of Marie Antoinette, for it was one of that unhappy queen's misfortunes not to appreciate the extraordinary power which literature then possessed in France; but it was welcome in the Palais Royal, and even before it was publicly displayed it was considered as giving additional lustre to that little Court. The plays which Madame de Genlis wrote for her children, and in which they

acted, had great and merited success. She did not publish them at once; and when she took this step, it was under circumstances very honourable to her kindness and generosity.

Without knowing him, on his request, and on what Queen Elizabeth called the best letter of recommendation — his open and honest countenance — Madame de Genlis had helped the Chevalier de Queissat to lie concealed a few days in the Palais Royal. This gentleman, unjustly implicated in an assault of which his brother was guilty, was ultimately apprehended, tried, and condemned to pay a heavy fine, or remain imprisoned for life. The amount of the fine was beyond his means, and he seemed destined to perpetual imprisonment, when Madame de Genlis, who had vainly used all her influence to procure his acquittal, again came to his assistance. She published her "*Théâtre d'Education*" for his benefit; princes, nobles, and generous persons bought copies at a high price — the public did the rest. The whole edition was sold off in a few days. It brought in 46,000 livres, all expenses covered, and delivered the captive.

Soon after thus honourably and successfully entering the career of letters, Madame de Genlis took another of those decisive steps towards which her whole life had been tending: in the year 1777, being then thirty-one, she became governess to the Duchess of Chartres's twin daughters, who were not yet a year old, and she entered with them the Convent of Bellechasse, in which she remained until the Revolution drove her from France. The two infant princesses, Madame de Genlis's two daughters, the three sons of the Duke of Orléans, her own niece, and a little English girl called Pamela, who afterwards became Lord Edward Fitzgerald's wife, were successively under the care of this devoted and admirable educator.

Slander has been so pitiless to Madame de Genlis — her own means of justification were so few — that even though no actual proof has been adduced against her, it is impossible to say how far she was innocent of the charge under which she has so long laboured, of having been the Duke of Chartres's mistress. But an impartial mind must acknowledge that if she fell into this deep error, she acted very strangely for an ambitious and corrupt woman. Instead of remaining in the Palais Royal to secure and enjoy her power, she left a prince who was not more faithful to his mistresses than to his wife and, at thirty-one, still young and eminently handsome, she

shut herself up in a convent, where she enjoyed, indeed, all the comforts and luxuries of life, but certainly not the haughty though infamous distinction of a prince's mistress.

In her memoirs, Madame de Genlis has the tact and good taste not to give the history of the slanders that were whispered in her prosperity, but that beset her exile, and gave it new sorrows. She alludes to them, however, and partly attributes them to envy — and, we believe, not without cause.

Madame de Genlis was well-born, well-bred, highly-connected, and wealthy — for her husband, enriched by a splendid inheritance, had purchased the magnificent seat of Sillery. She was very handsome; she excelled in every feminine accomplishment; she had graceful manners; she never appeared in society without wishing to shine, and without accomplishing her purpose; she enjoyed the friendship of the Duchess of Chartres, and the confidence of the Duke; she wrote plays, in which her lovely children acted, and which the fashionable world of Paris went mad to see; she published them, and acquired as an author celebrity that became European; to crown all, she educated not merely princesses, but princes of the blood; she occupied a post which Montausier and Fénelon had filled in another reign, and she did so with distinction and success; and if we add that she was imprudent, no slave to established laws, and that she gloried in authorship at a time when titled authoresses were rare, and considered to lose caste by writing for the public — we think that we have shown some reason why Madame de Genlis was looked on with a degree of envy which political differences afterwards turned into the bitterest hatred.

Madame de la Fayette's great modesty, ill health, and retired life had protected her from envy and censure, as other women were protected by their poverty and obscure birth; but Madame de Genlis appeared as an authoress at a time and in a position that made the censorious doubly bitter, when her least actions were known, and received the worst interpretations. One of her sins — a strange one it will seem now — was being the first lady who had a *bureau*: at a time when women of fashion, and even princesses, did not always know how to spell, this was considered an audacious infringement of masculine rights. No wonder that the climax came when the Duke of Chartres confided to her the education of his three

sons, with the title of *Gouverneur*. Until then princes had been instructed by men of the highest rank or the most eminent learning; for the first time a woman was called in to her natural task of educator.

There are few passages more interesting in the life of Madame de Genlis than those which refer to the education of her pupils. Active, energetic, indefatigable and vigilant, gentle and judicious, she accomplished marvels. Her contrivances for the instruction and amusement of the children confided to her care were most ingenious. Never was learning made more graceful than by Madame de Genlis, and rarely has teacher been more tenderly loved than she was and deserved to be. Hers was genuine education indeed. Adopting Rousseau's theory concerning manual occupation, she made her pupils learn various trades. The young Duke of Valentinois was an excellent carpenter. Like his brothers, he learned how to swim, and once saved a drowning man's life. Madame de Genlis even had her pupils taught how to bleed and how to dress wounds, and for a whole winter she took them to the Hôtel Dieu for that purpose. She taught them to be men as well as gentlemen, and gave them as firm and manly a rearing as if she had foreseen the sorrows which the future held in store. But as yet all was smiling and fair, and everything justified the words of Addison which Madame de Genlis had caused to be inscribed in letters of gold above the grated door that inclosed this happy retreat of youth, science, and literature — "True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise."

This time was perhaps the happiest in Madame de Genlis's life. She calls it "*une vie délicieuse*." It was at Bellechasse that she wrote the works which so long remained popular with youth — the two last volumes of her "*Théâtre d'Education*," "*Adèle et Théodore*," and "*Les Veillées du Château*." To her great mortification, the latter work was not pronounced by the Academy worthy of the Monthyon Prize for the most useful and best-written work published within the year; the distinction was bestowed on a very inferior and now-forgotten book by Madame d'Épinay — "*Les Conversations d'Émilie*."

This unjust decision did not affect Madame de Genlis's wide-spread fame. A few years before the French Revolution she went to England for a few weeks. She was received with great distinction. Fox, Sheridan, Lord Mansfield, the Duchess

of Devonshire, Burke, Miss Burney, the Prince of Wales, and the severe Queen herself, welcomed the distinguished *gouvernante* and authoress. Madame de Genlis spent six weeks in England; and, with that practical spirit which never left her, and was one of her eminent and distinguishing qualities, she brought back the moss-rose to France, where it was unknown.

The Revolution was the herald of Madame de Genlis's first troubles. The father of her pupils, now Duke of Orléans, shared the liberal fever of the times; ambition, hatred to the Royal family, and a wish for popularity, made him act a part neither honourable nor dignified in a French Prince and a monarch's near relative. Madame de Genlis, too, was a liberal, and believed in the regeneration of France. The Duke of Orléans caused his son to be received at the Jacobins, and Madame de Genlis took her pupils to witness the destruction of the Bastille. The Duchess of Orléans, whose political opinions were opposed to those of her husband, who for some time had ceased to regard Madame de Genlis with esteem or affection, and who resented the extreme though merited fondness which her children felt for their governess, vainly insisted that they should return to her care, now that their education was almost completed. Supported by the Duke of Orléans, Madame de Genlis resisted the Duchess, kept her post in defiance of scandal, and by thus forgetting her own dignity, did much to authorize suspicion.

After the King's flight to Varennes, and his return and captivity, Madame de Genlis, alarmed at the turn taken by that Revolution which had opened with such promises of love and brotherhood, prudently resolved to leave Paris. Accompanied by Mademoiselle d'Orléans, the Duke's only surviving daughter, she proceeded, in 1791, to England. Here she had some mysterious adventures, which she has recorded at full length, but which led to nothing. Her reputation in England was then of the most doubtful cast. The emigrants — who hated her cordially — had not spared her; and scandal magnified their assertions. The indecorum of her new mode of life especially scandalized those who in Madame Brulard — as she was called since titles had been dropped — could not recognize the “elegant, amiable, highbred Madame de Genlis, the apparent pattern of female perfection in manners, conversation, and delicacy.”

Some of the charges against her are minutely told in that mirror of the times, Miss Burney's *Diary*, and are extremely curious as a picture of that strange epoch of confusion.

"They give a very unpleasant account of Madame de Genlis, or de Sillery, or Brulard, as she is now called. They say she has established herself at Bury, in their neighbourhood, with Mademoiselle la Princesse d'Orléans and Pamela, and a *Circe*, another young girl under her care. They have taken a house, the master of which always dines with them, though Mrs. Young says he is such a low man he should not dine with her daughter. They form twenty, with themselves and household. They keep a botanist, a chemist, and a natural historian always with them. These are supposed to have been common servants of the Duke of Orléans in former days, as they always walk behind the ladies when abroad; but to make amends, in the new equalizing style, they all dine together at home. They visit at no house but Sir Thomas Gage's, where they carry their harps, and frequently have music. They have been to a Bury ball, and danced all night; Mademoiselle d'Orléans with anybody — known or unknown to Madame Brulard."

To one so precise as Miss Burney, and who had spent five years at a most formal Court, this must have seemed a most grievous fall indeed.

In 1792 Madame de Genlis and her pupil returned to France, but scarcely had they reached Bellechasse when they were informed that the young Princess was considered an emigrant, and must leave France until she received legal permission to return. They left at once for Tournay, Madame de Genlis vainly entreating her husband to escape before it was too late. He refused, saying it would be an act of cowardice to forsake his unhappy and distracted country. A few months later, having voted against the King's death, M. de Genlis perished on the scaffold. His death was as honourable as his resolve had been generous.

The Duke of Orléans could not fly, had he wished it; that rank which had been so fatal to his honour, tied him to the land, and compelled him to fulfil his fate. His gloomy, sinister, haggard aspect struck Madame de Genlis when they met, and filled her with forebodings of ill omen when they parted, and he bade his daughter a last farewell. A few weeks later he voted for the death of the King; and before a year was over,

the Revolution going on its course and resenting that Royal blood, even though humbled and lowered in the person of a Philippe Egalité, should have its representative in France, bade him ascend the scaffold of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

We cannot attempt to follow Madame de Genlis through all the vicissitudes and the wanderings of her long exile. But if in her youth she had, as she confesses, wished for strange adventures and romantic reverses, the wish was now fully gratified. She had been coldly received during her second stay in England; she was now shunned wherever she went. Foreigners knew her through the report of her countrymen; and this was not favourable.

She had long been odious to the Royalists, by her connexion with the Orléans family; by the patriots she was detested, as an accomplice in the republican General Dumouriez's treason. Soon after her arrival at Tournay, Madame de Genlis had married the young and beautiful Pamela Seymour to Lord Edward Fitzgerald; but Mademoiselle d'Orléans, Mademoiselle de Sercey, her niece, and the young Duke of Chartres, still accompanied her, and like her met with a sad, inhospitable reception wherever they turned their wanderings. A woman, two young girls, and a youth of seventeen, have rarely been more harshly persecuted. Poverty added its trials to unjustifiable obloquy. Madame de Genlis was able to pay for her board, and that of her niece and her pupil, in the convent of St. Clare, Bremgarten, Switzerland, which they entered under the assumed names of Madame Lennox and her nieces, the Miss Stuarts, but the Duke of Chartres was obliged to leave them. This separation produced one of the most honourable episodes in the life of the future Louis Philippe. For fifteen months he rose at four in the morning, to go and give lessons in transcendental mathematics, in a college of the Grisons. That bitter climate, that austere life, found him the worthy pupil of his wise and accomplished teacher. His real name and rank were not known till his departure. He called himself Corby. In happier days, he had seen that name above the shop-door of a tradesman in the Palais Royal; and it recalled France and home in exile.

In the year 1794, Madame de Genlis and Mademoiselle d'Orléans were compelled to part. The Princess joined her

aunt, the Princess of Conti, and Madame de Genlis and her niece left Bremgarten and proceeded to Germany. At Hamburg, Mademoiselle de Sercey married a rich merchant, and Madame de Genlis, now alone, wrote and worked for her living. Sent out from Berlin by the King's order, she found a safer and more hospitable home at Altona, where she passed as Miss Clarke. It was there she wrote her "*Chevaliers du Cygne*," which she sold to a German bookseller for a sum nearly equivalent to three hundred pounds sterling; and it was also there that, until her pen brought in its reward, she painted flowers and mosaic designs for the patterns of a print factory. She returned to Berlin after the King of Prussia's death, and continued her literary labours. In 1801 she got leave to return to France.

With a joyous heart the exile once more entered that land where she had been young, admired, and loved. Her second sojourn in England had not been happy; she was disliked and shunned. In Switzerland and Germany she was persecuted; and with one exception, no person of distinction sought her. When she was in Hamburg, Klopstock asked to be introduced to her. She granted him an interview, which she has very graphically described. "A little, lame, and ugly old man," is her not very flattering account of his person. "I rose, went up to him, and led him to an arm-chair. He sat down silently, with a thoughtful look, crossed his legs, sank in the chair, and took the bearing of a man who has settled down for a long time. Then with a high, shrill voice, he put the following strange question to me: 'Madame, which do you consider the best prose writer — Voltaire or Buffon?'"

Without waiting for a reply, the illustrious poet decided in favour of Voltaire; spoke for three hours; did not give his accomplished hostess time or opportunity to put in six monosyllables, and left her "delighted with her charming conversation."

Madame de Genlis did not return to France alone. She had three children by her husband; a boy, who died young, and two daughters, who married before the French Revolution, and one of whom died at twenty-three. Madame de Valence, her only surviving child, was in some measure adopted by her aunt, Madame de Montesson. Pamela, whom scandal called the Duke of Orléans' and Madame de Genlis's daughter, had left her young; her niece, Mademoiselle de

Sercey, was married in Germany; her royal pupils were with their mother, and after educating so many children, Madame de Genlis found herself alone, at an age when solitude is dreary. To a passionate love for children, she added an ardent and persevering love for education. Struck with the beauty and intelligence of a child belonging to a poor widow, whose apartments were the last she occupied in Berlin, she asked him of his mother. He was gladly given up to her. To his surname of Bäcker, Madame de Genlis added the name of Casimir, which was that of the boy she had lost so many years before, and her adopted son accompanied her to France.

She found Paris sadly altered. The streets had lost their old names; the very cries of the street-hawkers were now in a sad minor key; in the *fiacres* she recognized the private carriages of the old *noblesse*; she found the emblazoned volumes of their libraries on the book-stalls, and she saw the portraits of her dead or exiled friends in the old curiosity shops on the quays. Above all, that gay, brilliant society, in which she had acted so conspicuous a part, was scattered to every wind of heaven.

Napoléon was then first consul. He learned, after some time, that Madame de Genlis was returned to France, and that, having recovered nothing of her husband's large fortune, she was reduced to her own exertions for support. He generously gave her a handsome apartment in the arsenal; a pension of 6000 francs was afterwards added to this first favour. This handsome annuity, £ 240, she enjoyed until his abdication, and the return of the Bourbons. Napoléon did not merely like her works — he was especially delighted with "*Mademoiselle de la Vallière*"; he also thought highly enough of her intellect, to request her to write him a letter every fortnight, on any subject she chose — politics, finances, literature, and morals, at her pleasure.

Politics, Madame de Genlis declares, she disclaimed in these letters; but she adds that she wrote freely on literature. Hers was now, indeed, a purely literary life. The return of the Bourbons — of her pupils, the Duke of Orléans and his sister — changed nothing in her quiet existence; she continued writing almost to the last years of her life, which closed quietly in 1830, six months after the Duke of Orléans had ascended the throne of France under the name of Louis

Philippe. Mrs. Opie, then in France, called upon her, and found her, what Moore had found her years before — “a lively little old woman.”

“We went to La Comtesse de Genlis’s,” she writes in her diary; “she received me kindly, and I, throwing myself on my feelings, and remembering how much I owed her in the days of my childhood, became enthusiastically drawn towards her very soon. She is a really pretty old woman, of eighty-seven, very unaffected, with nothing of smartness, or affected state or style, about her. We passed through her bedroom (in which hung a crucifix) to her *salon*, where she sat, much muffled up, over her wood fire. She had dined at three o’clock, not expecting to be able to go out; but as the weather was fine, she soon consented to accompany us, but she, laughing, said, she must now go without *sa belle robe*. We said, in *any* gown she would be welcome. . . . Madame de Genlis did not talk much at dinner, but by her attention to what passed, and an occasional remark, it was evident nothing was lost upon her. After C. Moreau had given her health, with a most appropriate and flattering speech, wishing her to live many, many years, Julien the Encyclopédiste gave the health of the King.

“I thought Madame de Genlis conducted herself on this occasion with much simple dignity; yet it was a proud moment for her. . . . The room now filled with French, English, and Americans; many were presented to the venerable countess, next to whom I sat, and then to me; she seemed to enjoy a scene to which, for some time, she had been a stranger. I found, while I was conversing on some interesting subjects, she had been observing me. Afterwards she said, ‘*Je vous aime!*’ she then added, with an archness of countenance and vivacity of manner, the remnant of her best days, ‘*Je vous sème!*’ (imitating the bad pronunciation of some foreigner).

“At half-past ten I saw C. M. lead Madame de G. out, and I followed them, and paid her every attention in my power, for which she was grateful; when I had wrapt her up, and put on her bonnet for her, my servant got a coach, and C. M., another gentleman, and myself, conducted her home.”

A few weeks later we find very different entries in the same diary, under the date of Dec. 31st.

“C. M. came in to tell me poor Madame de Genlis was that morning found dead in her bed.” And, January 2nd: “Went

to meeting, afterward to see poor Madame de Genlis in her coffin. Happily arrived too late! Was introduced to some dear friends of the deceased, who, for her sake, received me, *à bras ouverts*, because she loved me! I promised to go to her interment."

It took place on the 4th of January, and is thus recorded: "Went to meet the mourners assembled for poor Madame de Genlis's funeral; Général Gérard was presented to me. At night, went to La Fayette's, as usual, and was introduced to many persons."

It was natural, no doubt, but there is something that jars between the two statements: the funeral in the morning — a party at night. Yet there is no doubt that Mrs. Opie — a kind and amiable woman — liked Madame de Genlis as that lady could make herself be liked. Fascination was her early gift, and did not desert her even in old age.

To the end of her life, Madame de Genlis also preserved one of the most remarkable characteristics of her long career — intellectual activity. In one of her last novels — "The Consistent Atheists" — she expressed the noble thought: "There is but one real misfortune on earth, and it is to think badly;" and, whatever her errors may have been, we think that through them all she strove towards that supreme good — a well-regulated mind. She never held anything beneath her attention, if it wore the aspect of knowledge. She never thought it too late to learn. When Lady Morgan called on her in Paris, and complimented her on the singular variety of her accomplishments, Madame de Genlis replied that she prided herself more on knowing twenty different trades, any of which would procure her a living. Her simple and easy manners, her vivacity, and the vigour of her mind greatly struck her visitor. They were only natural in a woman who, long after she had passed her seventieth year, read again all the classics of Louis the Fourteenth's reign, in order to preserve her style in its purity, and who wrote and published agreeable books when she was eighty-two.

The intellectual life of Madame de Genlis is more easily appreciated than her actual real existence. She has written her "Memoirs" in eight octavo volumes; they are silent on the heaviest charges against her, and contain many confessions which, without insincerity, she might have suppressed; and they leave the mind in some perplexity concerning her

real character — perhaps because that character offers many contradictions. From those pages, Madame de Genlis appears to have been both giddy and cold, amiable and resentful. With singular imprudence, indeed, she lays bare before us acts of deception so numerous, that sincerity cannot have been her habitual virtue. How far she has deceived her readers is the question that inevitably occurs to them as they read. She has not professed, at least, to tell us all the faults and follies of her life. And who can blame her? What life was ever meant to be thus revealed to the cold, inquiring glance of strangers? God himself has locked up the human heart, because to His all-forgiving and all-pitying gaze alone is it fit that it should be opened. They who wantonly betray its secrets, sin against Him no less than against their kind.

“The end crowns the work,” says the old Roman proverb, and perhaps it is well to judge a life by its close. That of Madame de Genlis ended in piety and virtue — whether that was built on penitence or not, let God judge.

There is a touching passage in the last volume of her “Memoirs,” which we will allude to, before closing these remarks. She went, one day, to look at the house where she had spent the first five years of her married life, and in which her three children were born. Melancholy thoughts, sorrowful regrets, and tardy repentance for many follies and errors, awoke within her as she thought of the sixty vanished years — that treasure of time which she had, she says, unprofitably used, and sometimes wasted; and she closes this meditation with a beautiful thought, that reveals the pure and Christian aspect of this eminent woman:

“Let us not murmur; for we need ask God to forgive us almost all our misfortunes.”

Our deepest sorrows are sins! Happy they whom humility has at last taught that lesson!

CHAPTER XV.

Historical Novels.

IN the collection of Madame de Genlis's works there is a short essay, entitled, "*De l'Emploi du Temps.*" No one had a better right than she could claim to speak on this subject. Madame de Genlis was an accomplished musician; she played admirably on the harp, and on almost every instrument; she sang well; she drew with some skill; she danced gracefully, and dancing was then an art, and an elaborate one. She was self-educated, and her acquirements were many. She was thoroughly versed in history and literature, French and foreign. The English and Italian languages were familiar to her. Her position as governess to the Duke of Orléans's children, led her to knowledge which even a well-educated woman may ignore— that of the manufactures of her country, for instance, with which she had made herself thoroughly acquainted. She was also well skilled in her needle, and in every feminine accomplishment. She joined practice to theory, and was an indefatigable worker. Some trades were even familiar to her. She could make artificial flowers, and morocco portfolios and pocket-books.

Neither so many accomplishments, nor so much knowledge, could be acquired without giving time and labour to the acquisition; and Madame de Genlis, who was a woman of the world, the attendant of a princess, and the governess of several young princes, was not, and could not be, mistress of her leisure. To what industry and perseverance may she not, therefore, lay claim, when, setting aside all that we have just enumerated, we look at the prodigious amount of her literary labours?

In the years 1825 and 1826, Madame de Genlis's works were published in eighty-four duodecimo volumes of average size. Her "*Memoirs*," in ten octavo volumes, and several works, the last of which she published in her eighty-third year, were not included in this collection; and, what is more praiseworthy than this extraordinary fertility, is that no woman who has written so much has also written so well. It is true that her invention failed as years closed on her, but to the last she wrote with clearness and elegance; she cannot

rank, indeed, amongst the fine writers of her country, for she had not genius; but she had many gifts — some delightful, some excellent, and which never forsook her. Amongst the rest, one which will always be rare and precious — the gift of judicious and original thought. A choice and delightful book could still be made out of the wise or graceful reflections this long-admired writer scattered through her pages during an authorship of more than fifty years.

Madame de Genlis's range was varied. Twenty volumes written by her for young people are still popular in France. Biography, history, education, etiquette, botany, fiction, religion, everything save politics, gave occupation to her fertile pen. She was also a critic, a severe though acute one; but next to her works on education, rank her novels; they had immense success in her own times, and are not forgotten, though much neglected, in ours. The best and shortest, "*Mademoiselle de Clermont*," is a beautiful and pathetic story. It is one of her historical tales, and, spite their deficiencies, these are still the most read of her fictions.

Historical novels are delightful when they appear, but they rarely go down to posterity. They belong too much to the time in which they were written, and when that time has gone by the charm is broken.

Madame de Genlis's historical novels embrace every period, from the days of the Prophets down to the court of the Regent. "*The youth of Moses*" she called a poem. She had precedents for the strange assumption; but can he be called a poet, who has no music in his soul? They alone who can sing, can claim a rank among the divine songsters of the human race. In "*The Knights of the Swan*," the authoress claimed some of the privileges of poetry. She wrote it in her exile, when many of the restraints of her life were removed, and its indelicacy verged on immorality. The profligacy of the cruel and voluptuous Armofède is meant as a warning, but though Spartans might stand and look at the drunken Helot, we need nobler and purer lessons than those of the heathen world. The historical perversions of this romance are curious enough. Never have the doughty Charlemain and his peers been more strangely represented. Who would dream of finding Ogier the Dane, that man of mighty appetite and robber ways, turned into a lovesick hero, a compound of the powdered Marquis and the pink-ribboned shepherd.

"Jeanne de France," "Mademoiselle de la Fayette," "The Duchesse de la Vallière," "Madame de Maintenon" are agreeable books, between biography and fiction; and though their popularity has passed away, they show extraordinary tact and skill, and had great success in their day.

Looking over French history, Madame de Genlis saw, on that often gloomy and often terrible back-ground, some tender and lovely female figures, whom the historian carelessly sketched as he passed on. She paused to look, and, having looked, could not resist the desire to linger, and paint at leisure. With a patient hand she collected materials, and interpreted them with a sagacious spirit. When there was a deficiency she supplied it, when there was an unpleasant passage she suppressed it. She thus produced flattered and softened portraits of lovely originals, portraits that had a charm in which biography often fails. They did not tell all, nor think every thing in a human life was meant to be told.

The history of "Jeanne de France" is beautiful and pathetic. Married by the cruel policy of Louis XI. to the young Duke of Orleans, she never possessed her husband's heart. She had a fine mind and a noble soul; she loved him devotedly; without her intercession and her tears he might have died in a dungeon; but she was misshapen and plain; he did not love her, and his first step on ascending the throne was to have his marriage annulled. Jeanne retired to a convent, took the veil, and died young in odour of sanctity.

This sad history Madame de Genlis developed with much skill. She considered the introduction of a plain heroine in fiction a daring act. We have progressed since then, and women have learned to be plain in print, as well as out of it. Indeed, plain or not, it matters little; the heroine will always be an ideal being, even though she may look most real; she will always be that something beyond truth, without which there is no fiction. Her beauty, her excellence, moral or intellectual, only show us after all the standard without which the reader will not admire. As his taste is, mean or lofty, so are the men and women of his books.

This daring attempt to enshrine a noble soul in a poor body, Madame de Genlis did not repeat. Mademoiselle de la Fayette, her next heroine in chronological order, was a dark and lovely girl, who inspired in the bosom of a King one of the purest passions woman ever returned,

Louis XIII., the inglorious son of an heroic father, acts a sad and subdued part in French history. The name of Richelieu claims all that his reign held of stern or magnificent. Power, mercy, life and death, the very destinies of France, were in the hands of the mighty Cardinal, and with them true, royal majesty. The Monarch was but a kingly shadow, who went wearily from palace to palace, a prey to sadness. Indolence and melancholy seemed constitutional in the son of the gay Gascon. Mistrustful of all who approached him, of his brother Gaston of Orleans, and even of his own proud and handsome wife, Anne of Austria, Louis twice had faith in woman, and, strangely enough, he chose for the objects of his platonic admiration two noble and generous girls, whose only object was to bind him more closely to the neglected queen. Both Mademoiselle d'Hautefort and Mademoiselle de la Fayette were devoted to Anne of Austria. But the weakness of man is fatal even to the objects of his love, and both Mademoiselle d'Hautefort and her successor found it so. That pale, handsome King, with the sad dark eyes and heroic face — that man who was personally brave, whose justice has passed into a proverb, and who, if he was severe to others, was to himself austere and unforgiving, yet lacked one of the noblest attributes of man — he could not protect what he loved. His mother died in a garret. Mademoiselle d'Hautefort was exiled, and Mademoiselle de la Fayette left the Court and retired to a convent. Richelieu's jealousy of her influence is the motive ascribed by history to her retreat; the scruples of her conscience at a passion which, though pure, was not lawful, is the theme chosen by Madame de Genlis.

Out of this slender thread of an ideal passion, unable to resist the hard touch of reality, she constructed a delicate and touching story. There was more matter, and far more interest, in the "Duchesse de la Vallière." But the most pathetic of its incidents are world-known, and the fictitious surprise without convincing us. We are also conscious of two heroines: of Madame de Genlis's, who speaks rather too much like a woman who has read Jean Jacques; and of the mild, humble Mademoiselle de la Vallière, who was born for virtue, who sinned without vice, who loved the king for himself, who shrank from the sight of the injured queen, and who, though too weak to break her bonds until love forsook her, yet tried to atone for her sin and her weakness by the heroic penance of thirty-three

years. Youth, beauty, love even — for either the Duke of Lauzun or the Prince of Longueville would have been glad to marry her — were all her own yet, and she buried them all in the living grave of a Carmelite convent. There is something too beautiful and too pathetic in such a story for it to be told again; it is one of the lovely legends of humanity made — to float down the tide of time.

Yet great success seemed to prove to Madame de Genlis that she had done right. The "*Duchesse de la Vallière*" was in every hand — even in the mighty hands that then wielded the destinies of France. Buonaparte began the tale, read it to the end without stopping, and shed tears over the close, which is beautiful and pathetic. It was of this book that Sir James Mackintosh said — "Though not precisely a novel, it is surely a most fascinating work." It was so, no doubt, but the truth has proved too strong for it.

"*Madame de Maintenon*" is almost all true. The history of that sagacious and remarkable woman, who succeeded the haughty Madame de Montespan in Louis the Fourteenth's heart, and who at the age of fifty-two married a monarch three years her junior, and the haughtiest king in Europe, did not require invention to read like a romance. Born in a prison, set to keep turkeys in her youth, married at eighteen to a burlesque and licentious poet without legs, exposed after his death to all the bitterness of poverty, she rose to the king's esteem, admiration, and love, by the power of a mind whose charm he acknowledged, and of a virtue which, though gentle, he found inexorable. More wonderful still, she secured the tender affection of his wife. Mary Anne of Austria gave her portrait but to one person, and that person was Madame de Maintenon. Neither could then foresee that the queen, the younger woman of the two, would die first, and that, though not bearing her title, Madame de Maintenon would be her successor on the throne.

But far more successful than this half novel, half biography, was a much shorter tale — "*Mademoiselle de Clermont*" — which is still Madame de Genlis's most substantial claim to fame. The best part of her youth was spent in a Court, and in a centre of courtiers and intrigues. She painted well what she had observed closely, and in her pages the old courtly world has a great look of reality. When she left palaces and noble mansions to enter more humble homes, she left behind

her the best part of her power — one of the greatest charms of all novel-writing — truth in detail.

By what had been to her the present she judged the past. Traditions supplied by the survivors of the preceding age gave the matter on which imagination might work. Madame de Pussieux, wife of Monsieur de Genlis's uncle, had been the Princess of Clermont's bosom friend; and it was at Chantilly, where the drama of her life took place, in an alley that still bore the ill-fated name of Melun, that she related to Madame de Genlis this short and sad story.

Mademoiselle de Clermont was a daughter of the illustrious house of Condé, and sister to that Duke of Bourbon who governed France for Louis XV. after the death of Philip, Duke of Orleans. Little is known of her, save that she was beautiful. Her name is merely mentioned in history, and would be forgotten if it were not found in Madame de Genlis's pages.

Madame de Genlis knew princesses well, and she has made Mademoiselle de Clermont a princess from head to foot. Beautiful, stately, and free, she moves about the princely abode, and the magnificent gardens of Chantilly, like a young queen in the first happy dawn of her sovereignty. No other female figure appears near hers. Her brother's influence on her destiny is decisive, but is carefully kept back until the catastrophe. The young king is mentioned, but we never seem to see him; we see no one save the generous, imprudent young princess.

With the quick instincts of vanity and pride, Mademoiselle de Clermont soon becomes conscious of the coldness of M. de Melun. In the midst of universal flattery his voice alone is silent. Mademoiselle de Clermont is piqued, and, availing herself of the privileges of rank, she questions him why, for instance, when she reads novels aloud to the ladies, is he a cold and inattentive listener. The Duke, surprised, hesitates to reply. At length he frankly answers —

“I see without pain persons of mediocre intellect and ordinary station waste in vain and useless tasks the season of youth; but in those whom their rank and their natural superiority raise above others, this mistake grieves me keenly.”

Mademoiselle de Clermont blushes, says no more, and withdraws her arm from his; but the next day, and to the annoyance of her female listeners, she begins a course of grave historical reading.

From this day the Princess chooses the Duke of Melun for her counsellor and friend. She sees in him a lofty ideal of honour and worth, which, under his guidance, she hopes to reach. How can he reject advances so modest, yet so bewitching? — how can he refuse to become the faithful adviser of this beautiful young creature, so docile to good counsels, so penitent after error?

He falls into the snare, but not blindly. If Mademoiselle de Clermont does not know the nature of the feeling that draws her towards him, he knows but too well what he feels for this princely lady. He knows, and cannot conceal it. With delight and pride she sees that she has conquered his coldness and subdued his austerity. Honour and duty compel him to shun her — he leaves Chantilly. But what matter? Great joy knows no fear. To love and be loved is happiness enough for Mademoiselle de Clermont. To her we might apply the subtle and delicate passage which the trials of another heroine suggested to the same author: "Love cares but for the present time. Of all feelings, it is that which the future troubles least. It fears to give it a glance; for it is never sure of finding itself there."

They meet in Paris. M. de Melun's fortitude cannot resist Mademoiselle de Clermont's dangerous openness; for, with a freedom which never offends — so much is it tempered by frankness and modesty — the imprudent Princess is ever showing him the power affection and esteem have given him over her heart. They exchange a rapid confession and mutual vows; then shocked at what he has done, at the ungenerous advantage he has taken of her weakness and ignorance, M. de Melun again departs — this time for months.

His struggles are vain. In vain, on his return to Paris, he even undertakes, at the Duke of Bourbon's request, to persuade Mademoiselle de Clermont to accede to a royal alliance, which she obstinately rejects. When he is left alone with her, his resolves grow weak. She does not hide that her love is unchanged, and solitude has only deepened his. Duty, pride, honour, are unavailing. There is but one theme on which the lovers can dwell. And thus it goes on. Mademoiselle de Clermont persists in a love which raises her in her own esteem, and M. de Melun in striving against a passion which his conscience condemns; for it makes him a traitor to truth — and two years in all pass away, and struggles, doubts, torments, suffer-

ing, and illness that looked in the very face of death, have only given their mutual affection more fervour and depth.

All this Madame de Genlis has told admirably. M. de Melun is a proud and honourable man, and his reluctance to yield to a passion which reason, as well as honour and pride, reprove, we never ascribe to coldness. Mademoiselle de Clermont is a noble woman; she loves because she esteems and admires. No brilliant courtier, no flatterer, won her heart. She does not stoop from her rank, she soars above it; and the delicacy of her choice redeems the freedom with which her partiality is displayed. Up to this the story progresses with the most delicate skill. It is a graceful love-tale: a beautiful princess loves an accomplished gentleman; it is not a love likely to end well, but its end is subordinate to its progress. We care more to know if Mademoiselle de Clermont will conquer M. de Melun's coldness, than whether she will sink from the rank of princess of the blood to that of duchess. But in fiction, as well as in reality, there is a dangerous point when love rushes on passion. That point is reached in the tale when Louise de Bourbon Condé suggests a private marriage to her lover.

From the time that fatal resolve is taken, the whole story changes. It is told in the same language, but not in the same key. A sense of gloom, of something ominous and disastrous hanging over the heroine and her lover, comes to us with great power. The love-tale is turning into a tragedy. As Mademoiselle de Clermont crosses, at night, the gardens of Chantilly, in order to go to the meeting whence she is to return as wife, she feels herself suddenly held back. She looks up, terrified. No one is there — no mortal hand detains her. It is but her dress that was caught as she passed by the statue of the haughty and heroic Condé, whose blood and name she is going to humble. For a while she is startled; but love proves stronger than pride, and she goes on.

Mademoiselle de Clermont is married; she is happy, and her happiness lasts a week, at the close of which the King visits Chantilly. She does the honours of the princely abode to her brother's royal guest. The fêtes are splendid; a stag-hunt takes place the second day of the King's stay. M. de Melun prepares, as usual, to follow Mademoiselle de Clermont's carriage; but the Duke of Bourbon, whose eyes are at length opened, has spoken sternly to his sister, and she is obliged to

bid M. de Melun to leave her. He rides away, giving her a last look. In a few minutes a loud cry is heard — he had crossed the chase, and the stag had turned round and gored him.

A wife, whose husband has received what may be his death-wound, is privileged to give up all to attend on him; but the unhappy Mademoiselle de Clermont is not a wife. She is a princess, a king is her guest, and etiquette has nothing to do with an aching heart. In vain, in her despair at not being allowed to see M. de Melun, she confesses her marriage to her brother. The Duke is not a brother — not even an angry one. He is a prince, and he checks his anger at this discovery, to help her to play her part to the end. He knows that death will soon rid him of an odious tie, and he bids her hope — he has even lenient promises of forgiveness with which to soothe her — and what with prayers, remonstrances, and commands, he keeps her out of the sick room. The surgeon is bribed — even the servants are deceived — every care is taken to keep the Princess in ignorance of the truth.

The King is to leave the next day. Mademoiselle de Clermont, splendidly dressed, waits on him for weary hours that seem intolerable. She is pale, spite her rouged cheeks. The forced smile on her lips, her restless looks, betray her secret torment. Strange, inquiring glances meet her everywhere, for who has not noticed her partiality to M. de Melun? The King alone is amiable and free. She sits next him at dinner; she must hear and answer. When dinner is over, the play begins, and the princess must hear it, with her brother on one side of her, and the King on the other. It is a comic play — the house rings with laughter, and her heart is breaking. Late at night the King leaves. At three the Princess is alone and free. She steals out, as she had stolen a week before to go to a happy meeting. She reaches his door — it is closed; she listens — all is silent. She returns to her room with daylight. There she sits down, passively waiting till her attendants waken.

But the King is gone, the *fêtes* are over, concealment is no longer required. At seven, she hears a step — M. de Melun's servant appears before her. No words are needed; his looks, his aspect, tell the tale — her lover, her husband, is dead! She sinks on her knees, and receives the paper this sad messenger has come to deliver. It is the first letter she wrote to him —

the words, "for ever," signed by her — the pledge of love she voluntarily gave him, when, from honour, he voluntarily renounced her after their first avowal. He held it dear, and sent it to her on his deathbed.

And thus ends "*Mademoiselle de Clermont*;" a tale remarkable for beauty and pathos, and, spite a little overstrained sentiment, for the directness with which it is told. *Mademoiselle de Clermont* is an exquisite heroine — one of those half angels whom J. Joubert loved in *Madame de Genlis's* works. Her faults are those of youth, inexperience, and high rank. Her virtues are all her own. She is modest, though free; but that freedom springs from the heroic greatness of her soul, and the worthiness of the loved one. It is the blood of the Condés asserting itself in the faith and truth of a woman's heart.

Very different is the "*Siege of la Rochelle*," though it is still a popular work with that easily-pleased class of readers who require, above all, a stirring plot and dramatic incidents. The story is improbable, but interesting enough. Clara Montalban, a beautiful and amiable girl, is on the eve of marriage with Valmore, a handsome young widower; her betrothed is rich, but not so wealthy as his young son, Jules. He is that son's heir, and Montalban, Clara's father, resolves to murder the child. He leaves the château, returns privately, and accomplishes the deed. He is seen by Clara, who had playfully hidden beneath a table. She faints with horror, and awakens to find herself accused of the crime, of which even Valmore thinks her guilty. She is tried, condemned, and reprieved. But she will not betray the real murderer, and the dishonour of guilt still clings to her. After many adventures, in which the siege of Rochelle is introduced, Clara discovers that Montalban is not her father, and can declare her innocence, and become the wife of Valmore.

The "*Siege of la Rochelle*" has merit, but the lowest sort of merit — merit unworthy *Madame de Genlis*.

The success of cotemporary romances misled her. She, too, would be pathetic and sublime! She produced a good imitation, which long passed current, but never with persons of delicate taste. The world of fancy is a strange world. It will allow imagination the wildest flights, but it requires consistency, and there is none in a mixture of wild invention and small reality. If we are led on at once into that something beyond truth — which at heart we all love — and kept there

as in a dream, we may read on, and never waken till the tale ends. Ardent writers have that power over us when they follow the bent of their own mind. They can make a truth of their own, and compel us to believe in it; but when they are faithless to themselves, the gift of persuasion forsakes them. It rarely goes alone — with it depart others as precious and as noble.

The worst of untruth in incident is that it leads to untruth in character. Valmore and Clara are incredibly calm through their awful trials. We are told that they marry and are happy. It cannot be. Clara cannot forget that she wore the features of a murderess in her lover's sight; that he has sickened to think he ever loved such a wretch. And if she can forget what ought to have burned itself into her very brain, can he? Will not the memory of his injustice be an ever-renewing torment? Can love, the strongest but the most delicate of feelings, survive such wounds in either heart? Duty, the tie of blood, teach to bear and forgive much; but unwedded love, love not calmed and sanctified by marriage, is lofty and exacting. It will have the whole heart, the whole faith, or it will have nothing. Nay, more, when it becomes conscious of having withheld those precious gifts, it perishes; for it becomes conscious of frailty and weakness, and of that which is most abhorrent to its nature — mortality.

CHAPTER XVI

Domestic Tales.

BESIDES her historical tales, Madame de Genlis wrote several novels, in which she painted society, Parisian or provincial, such as she had seen it before the great catastrophe of the French Revolution; or developed her own views and feelings on two subjects which she justly considered important — morals and education.

Some of these novels are amusing now by their strangeness. The "*Battuecas*," greatly prized by its author, rests on the tradition — a true one, she avers — of a lost Spanish valley, in which men and women grew up unacquainted with civilization, but naturally gentle and refined. Placide, the hero, is one of these delightful savages. He is a poet, too — a renowned one

—though his first adventure, when he appears in the commonplace Spanish world, is not of the poetic cast. Placide is unacquainted with mine and thine, and steals as naturally as any civilized thief, though somewhat more openly. A battle with a baker is the first lesson of law and property he receives. His little mistake is rectified by a friend, and he proceeds to Madrid. to fascinate a lovely and refined lady, criticize all he sees, undergo some adventures, and finally return to his valley and his Battuecas bride Inès.

"Alphonsine," another Spanish story, is conceived in the same probable spirit. After writing so much on education, Madame de Genlis no doubt remembered an important omission. She had shown how a prudent mother is to educate her child in the world. What if she were to show now how a daughter can be educated out of it. The lesson was not very practical indeed, but it had the merit of novelty. Accordingly, a wife is locked up in a cavern by her incensed husband, gives birth to a child, rears it safely and educates it.

Deprived of light since her birth, ignorant of a world beyond her cavern — of a human being besides her mother — ignorant of the very means by which that mother receives food, and acquainted with nothing that mercy enjoins to conceal, yet conscious of the existence of a God, of a future life — nay, even of death — Alphonsine grows up a prodigy of moral innocence. A young soul that has never been contaminated by the aspect of vice, a mind which the sight of external objects has never distracted, are beautiful, no doubt; but they are inconvenient. This young Eve, on being restored to light and the society of human beings, moves for some time in a world of enchantment, and displays the artless graces of primitive innocence. Like Miss Edgeworth's *Virginie* in "*Belinda*," she prefers flowers to diamonds: they are the more lovely of the two, and she has not learned that beauty can be perishable. The immortal splendour of sparkling gems, that durability which seems so strange in this changing world, are lost on Alphonsine, for she has no experience. The same deficiency allows her to be lured from her home by a designing lover, and, though innocent, to forfeit her reputation. She marries indeed; yet the merits of the cavern-plan education are seriously compromised in our eyes.

In all times stories as fanciful and as extravagant as these have been written. Amongst moderns, Sir Thomas More and

Fénelon, two pure and noble souls, found solace in the contemplation of ideal excellence, and of a fairer social state than that which they saw around them. The eighteenth century delighted in such visions of what it conceived to be perfection. What men and women we should have had if all its dreams could have been carried out! Rather alike, it is true; for individual character can only interfere with the beauty of systems; but men and women of the right sort, no doubt — else the inventors of the original model would not have held them forth to our admiration. But though we may be amused at this ideal of human excellence, we cannot remember without emotion how much of her aspirations towards a supreme good, how much of her resentment of great wrong, humanity has cast in that visionary channel. It was long her only outlet, as it was her only hope: for men it was politics, for women society. Fénelon reformed states, Mademoiselle de Scudéry improved love, and Madame de Genlis educated.

She had the clear, exact mind best suited to such artificial composition. Imagination spoils it, and she had little or none. Like De Foe, she could invent and paint, with great verisimilitude, modes of life of which she had no actual knowledge — the more unreal the better. Her choice of subject was not felicitous, but she made readers believe in her cavern life. It had no romance, no wildness; but it bore a clear, matter-of-fact air of truth.

"Alphonse, or the Natural Son," "The Parvenus," "Palmyre and Flaminie, the Rival Mothers," were used by Madame de Genlis as the vehicle of general social truth. They contain pleasing sketches, and embody some judicious opinions; but they are cold though well-told tales. Especially dull, from beginning to end, is "The Parvenus."

Strange to say, Madame de Genlis, who knew the world so well — the French world especially — who had seen life under all its aspects; who had been poor, rich, a countess, the companion of princes, an authoress, an exile, a fugitive; who had worked and written for her bread, and been compelled to mingle in every society — yet could only paint one aspect of life, the elegant and the courtly. In "The Parvenus" she attempted to paint the middle and upper classes of France before the Revolution, during its progress, and after its close. The effort showed her unequal to draw that shifting scene of life which she knew so well. She succeeded better in delicate

delineation of character. Under the name of the Duke of Rosmond, in the "Rival Mothers," we are to recognize the handsome, profligate Maréchal de Richelieu: —

"Nothing in him betrays vanity. His languid and abstracted look, his simple and easy manners, rather announce a sort of good-nature, and utter carelessness to please.

"Superficial in everything excepting in the art of seduction, he has only the kind of information that can impose on people of the world. His supple and subtle mind fails in breadth; his soul has neither loftiness nor sensibility; he has but one kind of penetration — that he possesses in an eminent degree. When he studies men, he can only perceive their weaknesses, errors, and vices. Their virtues escape him; he does not believe in them. Although he has no sort of principle, he thinks that one must never lose an opportunity of doing good, when one can do so without sacrifice or personal risk. Everything beyond this morality and goodness is only folly in his eyes. Delicacy, generosity, heroism, he considers extravagant, or the result of secret plans based on selfishness. Sublime virtue he considers the folly of a narrow mind, or the clever artifice of deep genius.

"His knowledge of the world has taught him that the most delicate praise is not the most convincing. Minds are so refined that ingenious flattery is mistrusted, precisely because it is so well turned. The Duke of Rosmond keeps his *finesse* for censure. His epigrams are full of wit and delicacy; but when he flatters, he only wishes to appear sincere. His praises have a laconism and a sort of coarseness that make them irresistible when coming from a man of so much wit. He utters them like so many commonplace, well-known truths. Neither his tone nor his manner allows one to suspect that he intends pleasing. His encomiums are received by the most humble: he does not give them; they seem to *escape* him — how can they be *refused*? If one ventures to think them exaggerated, he does not insist, but looks so surprised that one almost blushes at having been so modest; one fears to be accused of false humility. Such is the dangerous individual who has all the graces and all the vices required to appear with *éclat* in the career of gallantry and ambition, but who, in any other, would have been a man of extreme mediocrity."

Never was the Duke of Richelieu — the irresistible conqueror of female hearts, the universal favourite of his age —

drawn with a touch more sure and delicate than by Madame de Genlis, under the name of Rosmond.

"Rash Vows" is one of the most remarkable of Madame de Genlis's domestic tales. Skill, interest, close and correct delineation of character, thought, and feeling, are its attributes; but improbable incident destroys a fine lesson on the dangers of passion and the perils of enthusiasm. The rash vows that proved so fatal to the hero and heroine have not proved less so to the story.

The Marquis de Sainville is thirty-two. He is handsome, rich, and accomplished; yet he is not a happy man. He is sick of life, of human nature in general, and of women in particular. With every means of happiness at his command, he is hard, cold, and sarcastic; a wearied man of the world, whom nothing and none can please — not even his devoted friend the Baron.

The Baron is only a sketch; but he is very agreeably drawn. He is amiable, officious, and good-natured. He adores the Marquis of Sainville, and admires him profoundly. To forward his friend's happiness, and act himself the part of confidential adviser in a love-story, is his great delight. But M. de Sainville is so haughty, so fastidious, so mistrustful, that his are all short-lived passions, and the Baron is as often comforter of some fair forsaken one as adviser to his suspicious friend.

M. de Sainville is in one of his gloomy fits when the tale opens. After exhausting all the arguments of philosophy, the Baron proposes a journey to his friend's estates in Languedoc, a hundred and fifty leagues off. Sainville negligently consents, and they leave Paris the next day.

M. de Sainville, who likes neither town nor country, finds no great pleasure in his ancestral home; but the Baron finds a delightful mystery. An English lady, named Constance, has settled in the neighbourhood. She wears a thick veil; she neither pays nor receives visits; and no one knows anything about her — whereon every one concludes that she can be no good. The two friends manage to see her by moonlight, as she walks, unveiled, in her garden. She is young and lovely, and they both fall in love with her. Vain love, and dangerous — Constance must never marry.

The story of Lady Clarendon — such is the real name of Constance — is well told, and very interesting. She is beauti-

ful, amiable — her young husband adores her; but too fond a heart, a temper too exacting, make her utterly wretched, and with her every one who comes within reach of her fatal beauty.

Lord Clarendon and his wife have been married for a few years, when they go to London. He shows a taste for society and pleasure which, though not culpable, deeply offends his wife. Can a husband be fond when anything but his wife delights him? She grows querulous and sad; he wearies of her society. She confides her sorrows to Lord Elby, her husband's brother-in-law, a bosom friend; he hears her with sympathy, but his compassion bears no fruit. Lord Clarendon neglects his wife more and more; at length their estrangement is total; they live in the same house without meeting; and Ophelia, a handsome and accomplished girl of notorious profligacy, replaces Lady Clarendon in her husband's heart.

Lady Clarendon is overwhelmed with grief, but does nothing to win back the heart her imprudence alienated; or rather, she does but one thing, and that is fatal to her. Every night she enters her husband's study, takes down two drawings which Ophelia has presented him; she copies them as soon as morning light allows her, and before any one is up she restores them to their respective places, until her copies being finished, she can substitute them for the originals. The sterile satisfaction of knowing that her husband shall no longer admire her odious rival's sketches, is all the benefit she reaps from this imprudent step. Servants have seen her stealing about the house with a light and a key; they know that Lord Elby is her friend, they conclude that he is her lover, and that she admits him. Her sisters-in-law, who hate her, eagerly grasp at the accusation. Lady Clarendon does not even know that she is suspected, when her incensed husband sends her down to his seat in Derbyshire, and the public has pronounced her guilty.

Lady Clarendon is not dismayed. Has she not her friend, Lord Elby, to justify her and himself, by producing Ophelia's drawings? This hope is soon destroyed. Lord Clarendon departs for the Continent without seeing her, and Lord Elby writes a few sad words to acknowledge that his efforts in her favour have proved unavailing. Disgraced, though innocent, Lady Clarendon proceeds to Derbyshire. Everything is lost: reputation, the world's esteem, her husband's love.

Hitherto her sorrows have been brought on by an exacting spirit, which love resents; now pride, conscience, and injured innocence combine to lead her to the verge of ruin. She receives a letter from Lord Elby; he writes that, on the eve of leaving England for years, he should like to see her again, if she could prudently allow it. Lady Clarendon's answer is a prompt invitation. She longs for the presence of a real friend, and since her husband knows in his heart that she is innocent, and yet lets her be thought guilty, she is reckless of the world's opinion.

Lord Elby comes. The character of this nobleman is drawn with considerable skill. It is a careful study, which Madame de Genlis was unfortunately able to paint from life. His plausible aspect, his covert look, the caution of his behaviour, inspire us with a mistrust Lady Clarendon does not share. Lord Elby's conduct is at first exquisitely delicate and reserved. Yet gradually, and as light pierces darkness, it implies love hopeless and reverent, but human love for all that. Lady Clarendon is startled, frightened, and touched. She is too innocent to return this doubly-forbidden affection, but she has suffered too much not to feel its devotedness. Her imagination is fascinated, and Lord Elby's very coldness and austerity give more meaning and depth to his passion.

Accident discovers his perfidy on the very day she had appointed to give him a private meeting. It is he who slandered her, who alienated her husband. She taxes him with his treachery, and he meets her reproaches with a mixture of audacity, fierceness, and love. He confesses all — that for years he has been working to win her; he taunts her with the promised meeting, and vows that if it had taken place their destinies could no more have been sundered, for sin would have bound them for ever.

There is terrible truth in the accusation, and Lady Clarendon herself feels it; she is virtuous, she meant no harm, but she is weak, and, with a man so determined and so perfidious, must she not ultimately have been a degraded victim?

Lord Elby commits suicide, and Lady Clarendon convinces her husband of her innocence. He is full of joy and remorse; they love more than ever, and become more than ever wretched. The world does not choose to retract its opinion of Lady Clarendon's virtue. Her husband cannot compel either its silence or its civility. Stung and exasperated by a contempt he has

not the fortitude to endure, he mourns for the loss of a society without which he considers life worthless. Lady Clarendon is grieved to see that her love cannot repay him for all, when she, the injured sufferer, finds his love all-sufficient. In short, the weak man is still weak, and the impassioned woman has not learnt one lesson from experience. Too late she perceives that she can more easily not love than love moderately.

"For an extreme effort," she says herself, "we use all our strength, and as it is ever proportionate to the energy of our passions, it is ever possible to achieve self-subjection. But it often fails us when less courage is needed; and the victory that promises most glory is almost ever the easiest and the surest to win."

Useless knowledge. Lord Clarendon had survived his wife's supposed infidelity; but he cannot survive the world's neglect. He sinks into a slow fever, and dies. His wife vows to know no second love, causes her vow to be inscribed on his grave, and retires to France, and there becomes fatal to a third man.

Admiration and pity inflame M. de Sainville all the more. Lady Clarendon, who has been a widow some years, secretly returns a love more pure than Lord Elby's, and more impassioned than Lord Clarendon's. Pride and honour forbid her to confess it. Her denials are either dangerously mild or cruelly harsh; they seem made to charm and exasperate a lover. Now she tells Sainville that he will forget her, and marry another; and now, when he wishes to fly from her, she gently talks of friendship, and detains him. He becomes gloomy, and she is sad. It is a long, keen, tormenting struggle, in which neither prevails entirely, and in which both suffer agony: Sainville, because he has no hope of prevailing — Lady Clarendon, because she daily feels herself growing more weak. She had built herself an idol of passion and heroic fidelity, and with bitterness she feels that if Providence had not favoured her, she would have become Lord Elby's mistress, though she loved her husband; and, humbled in her own heart, she learns by a second love — stronger even than the first — that quick and exacting affection is not always deep.

At length, love prevails over pride. Sainville is returning from a journey. Lady Clarendon learns that grief has worn him to a spectre; and after the most harrowing hesitation and

remorse, she meets him with the declaration that she is his. M. de Sainville hears her with the gloomiest mien lover thus favoured ever wore; he opens his cloak, and shows her the cross of the order of Malta. He is a Knight of Saint John; he cannot marry; he has taken a vow more solemn, more binding, than that she had caused to be engraved on her husband's tomb.

Lady Clarendon has survived the loss of her husband's love, of reputation, and of her idolized husband himself — why must the emotions of a few hours bring on a fever that carries her off rapidly? She dies happy not to have broken her vow, and exacts from her lover a solemn promise not to attempt his life.

Thus ends this well-told tale of passion, in which the incidents are too often improbable and exaggerated, but the feelings never. Lady Clarendon is weak, loving, amiable, and, like all weak persons, selfish. It is her love, her passion, her pleasure, that she consults throughout. She is virtuous, charitable, and forgiving, but she has not one lofty, one generous, one self-forgetting impulse. Even her passion has no substance, no reality — it is but an echo or a dream. She is made to love, not once, but as often as one love leaves her and another comes.

Very different from feelings so weak is Sainville's furious passion. It is vehement as well as deep; exacting — jealous even of the past — but strong and living. We see him no more after Lady Clarendon's death, but we know that he will never experience a second love. He gave her all he could give to woman — faith, reverence, jealousy, and adoration. There is no well-spring in his heart, to renew these offerings. We may wonder that a woman's fragile beauty should kindle love so strong, but the worthiness of the object has not much to do with the durability of human affection. We must not judge the love by the loved one, but by the heart of the lover; as that heart is weak or strong, light or deep, so is the feeling.

And here we end with Madame de Genlis. She wrote many more novels, none equal to those we have noticed. She had many gifts; the most effective was character — not graphic character, but that which a delicate pen can analyze in a few words, or sketch briefly. Delicacy and *finesse* mark these sketches; they are not the result of intuition, but taken from life and society by an observer full of penetration. We

may rely on Madame de Genlis, for when she painted what she had not seen she fell into error. The real world, which is invisible to some, to her was always present.

CHAPTER XVII.

Madame de Charrière. — The "Letters from Lausanne."

THE delicate taste of an ingenious French critic has of late years revived the neglected, though not forgotten, name of Madame de Charrière. She was never popular, not even in her own day; Madame Riccoboni, Madame de Genlis, and Madame Cottin herself, are far better and more extensively known than the authoress of "Caliste" is, or ever will be; and yet though those three ladies wrote more interesting and better constructed stories than this charming Dutch woman, not one of the three equalled her in some of the most intellectual, and consequently highest, qualities of novel writing. She drew character better than they did; she could give to details of everyday life a truth and a charm which she owed, perhaps, to her Dutch blood, and which they never possessed; her dialogue was superior to theirs — in style, too, that charm of charms, she left them far behind. Yet the consummate skill of Madame de Genlis, the graceful tenderness of Madame Riccoboni, and the passion of Madame Cottin conquered her and prevail over her to this day. Where Madame de Genlis exerted all her tact and art, Madame de Charrière was graceful and careless; and, worse still, when Madame Riccoboni, and, later, Madame Cottin, poured out their whole heart — the latter especially — and bore away the reader with that mighty tide, Madame de Charrière was reflecting, amiable, sceptical, and cold.

She had not the gift which imagination leaves to the most clear-sighted, a tender faith in invisible virtue and love. We miss in her writings the hope in some unknown good, the enthusiasm for some ideal, human or divine, without which nothing, not even a novel, can please or satisfy readers. They like, and have always liked, stories that bear a meaning within them. Whether it be love, virtue, or even vice, a meaning the tale must have, not a purpose, that would spoil any story. But Madame de Charrière's tales are deficient in purpose, moral, or meaning; they are delightful introductions to some

tale that never comes. We see the promise — the fulfilment escapes our view. A delicate mind must prize them, for they are exquisite sketches; but the oblivion or the indifference of the majority is their fate.

Madame de Charrière's life is like her works: it opens fairly, and ends in disappointment. With birth, beauty, wealth, and wit, with no indifference to society or fame, she married a commonplace man, spent her life in French-Switzerland, far from that brilliant centre of thought, Paris, and acted no part worth noting in the politics, society, or literature of her day. Was that want of ardour and faith which is the defect of her works, also the fault of her nature — and could she not believe in herself enough to command that success which Fortune rarely grants to the indifferent and the cold? We know so little of her, save in her last wearied years, that we can scarcely answer that question with truth.

Even the exact date of Madame de Charrière's birth is not known. M. de Sainte Beuve conjectures that Mademoiselle Isabelle A. E. Van Tuyll Van Serooskerken Van Zuylen — such were her alarming names — was born towards the year 1740. She was of noble origin, and moved in the highest society of Holland. French she knew from her childhood, and she spoke and wrote it well. Her familiar letters to her mother and her relatives are all in French; and the very first — those she wrote when she was emerging from childhood into youth — have the easy, rapid, and lively style she preserved to the last. They also bear traces of an ironical spirit, of a familiar scepticism, that do not promise future happiness.

Her country and her countrymen she held in little respect, and laughed at them in French: a fatal sign and a bad beginning. English, too, she knew, and her visit to England, in 1766-7, gave the tone to some of her best works. Some of her criticisms, for criticism she must, have been preserved: —

"You would be surprised to see beauty without grace, fine figures that cannot curtsy, ladies of the first virtue looking like grisettes, and much splendour and little taste. It is a strange country. There are in our neighbourhood six women separated from their husbands, and I have dined with a seventh."

Under the date of March, 1767, she wrote: —

"Nothing astonished me in London; but during the last fortnight I saw several seats that surprised and charmed

me: even in the beginning of March, it is a hundred times beyond all that I have seen elsewhere in the most favourable season. But, dear aunt, would you admire new ruins? It is all beautifully imitated: the gaps, the slits, the colour, the loose stones, the real ivy that covers half the old building, are all perfect, and could be taken for the reality, but are not. One knows it is all new, and I am surprised at the fancy and admire the imitation, without being able to say that this sort of ornament pleases me. I will have no ruins in my garden, lest I should be laughed at. These ruins are very fashionable. The age and country are free. Some are Gothic, others Greek, others Roman. My mother, who is so fond of old buildings, would prefer Windsor Chapel, with the banners of the knights, and their complete suits of armour. I dropped a deep curtsy to that of the Black Prince."

This lively lady was not far from her thirtieth year when she married M. de Charrière, her brother's tutor. She had a dowry of a hundred thousand florins, and might have contracted a more brilliant alliance. The Baron d'Hermenches, the Marquis de Bellegarde, a Prince of Anhalt, Lord Wemyss, had been amongst the suitors for her hand: why they were rejected and M. de Charrière was accepted, we are not told. Perhaps the temptation of an almost French home had something to do with the more than half-French Mademoiselle Van Tuyll's choice.

We doubt if her married life was very happy; but could she have ever been happy? Even authorship came late, and yielded her but its most autumnal joys. She was forty-four when she published her first work, "*Les Lettres Neufchâtelaises*," suggested to her by what she saw and knew of Neufchâtel life in her summer abode of Colombier. The work was attacked, but it was in some degree successful. It was followed by others, but "*Caliste*" alone, as we gather from Madame de Charrière's letters, paid its expenses, and so slight was the hold she possessed on her cotemporaries that a complete list of her works does not exist. Her last tales never appeared in French, and were merely written to be translated into German. The land and literature she despised were more hospitable to Madame de Charrière than those she had adopted.

She had reached her forty-seventh year, and she was on a visit to M. and Madame Necker in Paris, when she met in their

house a dissipated, ennuyé young man of twenty, whose name as connected with hers has done more to compel the attention of biographers than any other event in her quiet life.

Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, a Swiss by birth, a Frenchman by origin, as well as in temper and feeling, was, from the beginning of his remarkable career to its close, subject to feminine influences as varied as they were powerful. Like all sensitive men who have lost their mothers in youth — his died at his birth — he seemed impelled to seek in woman the friendship and tenderness home deprived of its great charm could no longer yield. In Madame de Charrière he found friendship tender and indulgent; a charming mind, just sceptical enough to suit his, and that seduction which the remains of beauty give to a woman at every age. For a time she was all-powerful. Then he married a German, Wilhelmina, whom he soon divorced; then came the reign of Madame de Staël, fervent and stormy; then a second marriage, of which we know little, and, last of all, when Benjamin Constant was fifty, when he seemed to have exhausted every passion, even gambling, and every political opinion — for he had passed through all — the mystic, penitent Madame de Krüdener helped to soothe the passionate sorrow caused by the inexorable beauty of Madame Récamier.

That Madame de Charrière was his first genuine friend, the first who exercised real influence over him, is certain. Her years did not allow the feeling that bound them to go beyond friendship; but it had much of the exclusiveness of love, and some of its jealousy, too. Its fervour was short-lived. For who and what could have long charmed a heart like that of Benjamin Constant?

There is a precocity which is fatal to virtue and happiness, for it is not that of the intellect, but of the whole being. Such was Benjamin Constant's. At twelve, he wrote letters as world-worn as if he had been thirty. Yet his boyhood was wilful and indolent. His tutor, discovering that open means of instructing him were not likely to be successful, adopted stratagems, against which the boy's penetration was not proof. He gravely proposed the invention of a new language. Benjamin eagerly consented; the professor found him the alphabet, and no doubt helped him with the words, since the language thus invented was Greek.

Happiness was not likely to be the lot of one so perverse.

After a dissipated life in Paris, he went off to England with a few guineas in his pocket; thence he wrote half-polite, half-ironical letters to Madame de Charrière. On his return to Lausanne he was rather sharply received by his family, and took refuge at Madame de Charrière's country home, Colombier.

Two pleasant months he spent there; but the friends were too much alike to be long happy. They began by exchanging notes from their apartments in Colombier, by writing weekly after their first separation, then a bitter and insolent letter of Benjamin's broke their correspondence for a while. It was resumed, but never with the old warmth. Benjamin Constant's passion for Madame de Staël pained and annoyed Madame de Charrière, who called her the talking machine. Her letters to Benjamin Constant became scarce, and she complained that he left them unanswered, and lost the MSS. she sent him. He complained in his turn that her letters were all filled up with the errata in her works; and he is said to have spoken of her slightly. And thus ended, in something worse than the silence in which so many friendships lie buried, a feeling which promised to be life-long, and which, with a little more faith on either side, might surely have lasted a life-time. But it was to Madame de Charrière that Benjamin Constant wrote, "I like poetry in no language." Would he have dared to write this to Madame de Staël? It was to her, even at Colombier, at the dawn of their friendship, in one of the familiar and affectionate notes sent from his room to hers, that he exclaimed, talking of mankind, "Poor little insects! — what is happiness or dignity?"

And to him a few years later, when he inquired concerning the sequel to the pretty story of Cecile, in the "Letters from Lausanne," Madame de Charrière gave the following sad reply: "Where can I find some enthusiasm, some conviction that man can be worth something, that marriage can be a sweet, tender, and strong tie, instead of an uneven, heavy, and yet weak chain? Imagination withers on seeing all that is, or rather one thinks oneself mad for having felt the emotions of a few moments, at what might have been. The time of a certain romantic simplicity of heart was prolonged for me beyond the common lot; but can it always last, spite the aridity of my position?"

What illusion could there be in a friendship that used such language? None.

Madame de Charrière was attached to her young friend, forgave him constantly, and loved him to the last. He admired and appreciated her, and for years felt and expressed a friendship that was tender for him. But, alas! there were no illusions on either side, and even friendship cannot do without illusions. What Madame de Charrière thought of Constant we do not well know; she is generally thought to be the original of the following portrait taken from his bitter novel of "Adolphe."

"At the age of seventeen, I witnessed the death of an elderly lady, whose remarkable and eccentric mind had helped to develop mine. Like many, she had, in the beginning of her career, stepped into life with the consciousness of a strong mind and of great intellectual powers; like many, too — and for having refused to bend to factitious but necessary conventionalities — she had seen her hopes destroyed, and her youth spent without pleasure. Old age had reached her at last, but had not subdued her. She resided in a château near our property. She led a dissatisfied and retired life. Her mind was her last resource; and she used it to analyze everything. For a year we contemplated life, under every aspect, in our endless conversations, and death as the only end of all; and after having so long talked of death with her, I saw death strike her before me."

There is more tenderness in Benjamin Constant's letter of farewell to Madame de Charrière, one of the last she received from him, and which he wrote on the eve of the journey to France which gave him a political career and a new country.

"Farewell! you who have made lovely eight years of my life; you whom, spite of a sad experience, I cannot imagine either constrained or false; you whom I appreciate better than any will ever appreciate you! Farewell!"

Nine years after receiving this letter, Madame de Charrière died, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, on the twenty-seventh of December, 1805. Her declining years were saddened by ill-health, and the loss of every illusion — both stoically borne. A year before her death, she wrote to a friend: —

"If you think that M. and Madame R. can give you news of us you are mistaken. Monsieur put some stupid questions

to me whilst M. de Charrière was sleeping. After hearing him with a sort of surprise, I answered: — ‘All that I can tell you is, that M. de Charrière walks a good deal in the garden, reads part of the day, and plays every evening.’

“When I was young, I have repeated, a hundred thousand times, those verses, as I paced the château of Zuylen: —

‘Un esprit mâle et vraiment sage,
Dans le plus invincible ennui,
Dédaigne le triste avantage
De se faire plaindre d'autrui.’

And I have not so far forgotten my lesson as to talk of myself to a Madame R. Scarcely can I make up my mind to mention my ailments to a physician; and when I talk of my melancholy to some one, I must be forced to do so by an excess of weariness which I might call despair. Only by the amusements in which I still indulge myself do I voluntarily betray my feelings.”

Madame de Charrière's “Letters from Lausanne” are her claim to literary celebrity. It is an agreeably written but melancholy book; for it seems intended to prove that, whether returned or not, whether felt by the innocent maiden or the penitent sinner, woman's love is ill-fated. There is no despair, no pathetic or touching appeal to our feelings; but the inexorable truth is woven no less in the flirtation of which Cecile is victim than in the passion which causes all Calista's sorrows.

Calista has a story; Cecile has not. Hers is but one of the episodes of youth, and it is unfinished, imperfect, like a glimpse from the great drama of reality. It begins, but does not end; and there is the fault of Madame de Charrière's tales. They are sketches, not pictures. She lays down her pen precisely when we begin to feel interested; for then it was that her own interest in what she wrote ceased. Too clear-sighted and too cold to indulge her imagination in what is possible, and too sensitive to draw the gloomy picture of what is, she set her task aside and indulged herself in some new beginning, in some new promise of happiness and love, never to be fulfilled.

Spite the charm of the narrative, few books are so unsatisfactory as hers. Her characters are like pleasant fellow-travellers, scarcely known when they go their own way, and leave us behind, solitary and dull.

What avails it that Cecile is a charming young girl? We get a few pages from her youth, we see her with her kind and indulgent mother, with the young lord, and the little pale minister and the middle-class and aristocracy of Lausanne; then she takes a journey to Languedoc — for the young lord has not spoken. Her heart is heavy and sad — we feel and know it; but we never see her again. No doubt that time consoles her — probably she marries, and is decently happy; but what can atone for the fact that we saw her just long enough to like her, and that when our feelings were interested in her favour she was capriciously withdrawn from our view.

The slight story is very vividly told by Cecile's mother, in a series of letters to a friend. The mother is sensible; the daughter pretty, good-humoured, but with more rectitude and judgment than finesse or elegance. She is fond of dancing — not too fond of pleasure — she is poor, too, yet has her admirers. But the prudent mother weighs them, and finds not one worthy of her Cecile. Her little cousin, the minister — pale, thin, sickly, pedantic, the pet of mother and aunts — who thinks himself, and is thought a genius, because he writes bad verses, and preaches bad sermons, who wears goloshes, and shivers under the least breath of air, is no match for the gay, lively, and intelligent Cecile. Another minister, his friend — a fine, dashing young fellow, who goes out shooting, studies little, and preaches moderately — will not do either, though he, too, is smitten with Cecile. A third admirer, who belongs to the middle class, and has the vices of the aristocracy, is likewise set aside. A young tradesman, mild and honest, is not grand enough, for Cecile writes a "de" to her name. A young Bernese — good, handsome, and well off — remains; he is fond of Cecile. He would do very well, but Cecile has set her heart on a young English lord who boards with her cousin, the minister; and it is this girlish liking that we follow, from its dawn to its abrupt close. The anxious vigilance of a fond and penetrating mother is our guide; through her we see signs so slight that else they would escape every look.

These signs are slight, because the feeling, though real, is calm and natural. It is young love — not violent or engrossing passion. No extraordinary or unusual incident draws it forth. Modesty, pride, a prudent mother's counsel, the lover's carelessness — everything, in short, conspires to subdue it. No

well-bred, well-taught girl could behave otherwise than Cecile behaves. She has just feeling enough not to be cold, and not too much to be singular, or to run the risk of being thought forward. The whole story of that little innocent flirtation is told with exquisite delicacy and finesse. The young lord — he goes by no other name — now comes forward, now draws back, not that he means to trifle with Cecile, but because he likes her more or less, according to her coldness or her involuntary preference. When he is in her favour — and he sees it — his love grows cool, for he does not want to marry. When she is shy and reserved, he is sorry, for he likes her at heart, and his only feeling is to win back her liking. At length Cecile has the good sense to withdraw from the unequal contest. She goes to the country with her mother, and thence proceeds to Languedoc — whilst the young lord pursues his travels with a very melancholy friend, who relates to Cecile's mother the story called "Caliste."

Thus ends the "Letters from Lausanne" — the story of a brief though interesting struggle between man's coldness and woman's pride and finesse; but in which, as is usual, the colder of the two conquers. The young lord never speaks of love, but he goes as far as a man may go, without venturing on that dangerous ground. He teaches Cecile chess — and lessons of all sorts are dangerous.

"They looked like two children," writes the mother; "and more so than ever on that evening. My daughter was continually committing mistakes, which gave birth to jokes as merry as they were indifferent. Once the little lord was provoked with her want of attention, and Cecile was vexed with his impatience. I saw they were sulking, and shrugged my shoulders. A while after, no longer hearing them, I looked up. The hand of Cecile lay motionless on the chess-board, her head was slightly bent forward, her eyes were down-cast. The young man also bent towards her — seemed to devour her with his looks. It was the oblivion of all — ecstasy, complete forgetfulness.

"'Cecile,' I softly said, for I did not want to frighten her, 'what are you thinking of?'

"'Nothing,' she replied, hiding her face in her hands, and abruptly pushing back her chair. 'I think that wretched chess fatigues me. For some time, my lord, I have been

getting more and more perplexed, and you would only have more reason to complain of your pupil. Let us put it by.'

"She rose, left the room, and did not return till I was alone. She knelt, leaned her head against me, and taking both my hands, she bathed them with tears.

"My Cecile, what is it?' I asked; 'what is it?'

"I must put that question to you, mamma. What is passing in me? What have I felt? Of what am I ashamed? What am I crying for?'

"Did he perceive your emotion?' I asked.

"I do not think so, mamma," she answered; 'sorry perhaps for the impatience he had betrayed, he pressed and kissed the hand with which I was lifting one of the fallen chessmen. I withdrew my hand; but I felt so glad that he was no longer vexed, his eyes seemed so tender. I felt so moved. It was then you softly said, 'Cecile, Cecile!''"

The mother is all indulgence; yet she gives her daughter some prudent advice; the upshot of which is that a woman cannot too carefully guard her heart from her lover's view, and that the young lord cannot be kept at too great a distance. Cecile finds the lesson hard, but she obeys it.

But it leads to nothing. The distinction between a girl's love and that of a young man is nicely shown. Hers would ripen into the true woman's affection; his is cold from its very dawn, and would never be manhood's passion or steady love. The mother sees it, and takes Cecile away. They go to the country. Compassion for the poor and the suffering does Cecile good; even a stray dog starving, and all but dead of want and cold, can take up her thoughts, and give relief to the kind heart. Hence the very beautiful reflection uttered by her mother, and in which we might all find food for meditation: —

"Instead of reasoning, instead of moralizing, give something to love to one who loves. If love is the peril, love will be the safeguard; if love causes the grief, love will give the consolation; to the heart that loves, and knows how to love, love is the only business, the only task, the only pleasure of life."

"Calista," the history of a melancholy gentleman who travels with the young lord, is an impressive tale — one of the saddest and most searching a woman ever wrote.

The heroine, a beautiful English girl called Calista, for

having appeared one night in the part of the "Fair Penitent," is basely sacrificed by her unworthy mother. She is almost a child, and sin surrounds her before conscience and pride have awakened. The tenderness of Lord M—, the delicacy with which he treats her, leave her the charm, though not the reality, of innocence, and at his death Calista, still young, beautiful, accomplished, virtuous and good by nature, is doomed to the lifelong misery of a name disgraced, and to the sting of secret shame.

It is then that she meets a lover, the friend of the young lord — for he is known by no other name. They are at first deluded by the sweet semblance of friendship; but he learns that she loves him, and in a transport of joy he kneels at her feet. Bitter and sad is her exclamation: —

"I know love now that it is too late! Ah! what a position is mine! The less I deserve respect, and the more I need it, I should see an insult in all that might prove love. The least infraction to the laws of the severest reserve would terrify and humble me, make me remember with horror what I have been — what renders me unworthy of you in my own eyes, and in yours, no doubt — what I will not, what I must never become again. Ah! I have known the price of a stainless life and reputation only since I know you. How often have I wept on seeing a girl — ay, even the poorest, but virtuous, or even merely innocent! Had I been like her, I would have given you my life, and been your servant. You could have married, for I should have been known to you alone. I would have served your wife and your children, and I would have set my pride in being thus completely your slave — in doing, in bearing all for you. But what can I do — what can I suffer? Known and degraded, I can be neither your equal nor your servant. You see that everything has occurred to me. For a long time I have but one thought — to love you; and the grief and joy there is in loving you! By telling you how much I love you I have, at least, given myself one moment of happiness."

Woful is the love that must begin with such confessions. Calista neither blinds herself nor attempts to deceive him. She warns him to leave her whilst he can do so with honour; or if he remains, to be faithful and true, and yet expect nothing. He stays, loves her a little while, then wearies,

without exactly ceasing to love her. A parting follows — sad but inevitable conclusion.

All this is very simply told. There is no exaggeration, no paradox, no undue sympathy with the fallen, no justification of wrong, no accusation against society and her laws; and yet, by a masterpiece of skill, all our sympathies are with the beautiful sinner, all our indignation is against the man whose respect for a father's authority and prejudices prevents him from giving his name to a beloved but dishonoured woman. Why is this? Perhaps because with Calista there is both goodness and truth, and that with her lover there is nothing but weakness — shameful and miserable weakness. Her love is a great love; his is pusillanimous, and fatal to its object.

When a man has the misfortune — and it is a great one — to love a fallen woman, he cannot love her too boldly, too courageously. The more she is sunk in the world's esteem, the more must she stand high in his. If his love be not an altar on which she is adored, it is nothing. It no longer honours — alas! it only degrades her.

It is for not having felt this that we hold Calista's lover in such little worth. She warned him that she would never be his mistress, that he might find it too hard to call her his wife. How then can we absolve the man who accepts this love, and is faithless to it? A firm mind and a true heart would have withdrawn at once, or at once have said, "Be my wife. Neither your pride nor my love will allow any other tie between us. Be mine, and all mine." He does neither. He says he would marry her if his father consented; and what father, looking at the matter with calm, unprejudiced eyes, would consent? But no sense of tenderness or respect causes him to shrink from the prospect of an unworthy tie. Her pride and her virtue, tardy but true, are her only safeguards.

In the bitterness of her wounded pride, Calista takes a resolve, which, so vacillating and weak is his love, he does not oppose, and scarcely suspects. A wealthy country gentleman, who knows her past life, who visits her daily, asks her to become his wife. Calista hopes a while that the man she loves will endeavour to prevent this — that when she has left he will follow and recall her, and claim her his for ever. He does not. He is struck with grief and dismay at her departure, but there he stops, and she becomes the wife of another.

His own marriage, with a modish and light widow, follows, to his father's great joy. But Lady Betty, stung at her husband's coldness, becomes indiscreet; and the proud man who would not call Calista his daughter must needs overlook the misconduct of the fashionable lady. Thus all are punished: the father in his pride, the son in his weakness, Calista in her heart.

For she was not true to love — why did she marry? Not to make her husband happy, be happy herself, or secure the world's respect. The woman who has been wrecked in the great venture of life, and to whom esteem can no longer give happiness or love, is scarcely so worldly. Calista's marriage is an act of revenge, delicate and refined, against her cold lover. She does not exactly marry to vex him, but to place between him and her an inexorable barrier. He knew not how to break through the world's trammels for her sake — every one of those fair but heavy chains shall now weigh upon him, and divide him from her for ever. In this, resentment leads her beyond the laws of true dignity. Is marriage with her lover's rival a neglected woman's only refuge? Even though slighted and contemned, has she within her secret heart no home where she can bury the past, and through sorrow and endurance reach a divine future, not of oblivion, but of peace?

But, to say the truth, Calista, though noble and good, is something like Madame de Charrière herself — a sceptic of the eighteenth century. This world, whether harsh or good, is her future. To this world she turns for comfort in tribulation. It is her great resource, her universal panacea — too clear-sighted to be quite deceived, too human not to yearn for consolation, she does what would be wise enough if she were colder: she marries. But a fainting-fit, on learning her lover's marriage with Lady Betty, alienates her husband for ever. Wounded in his pride, he does not reproach his wife, but his cold resentment stings her to the quick. There is no quarrel, no *éclat*, but Calista leaves her husband's house, and comes to London. The uncle of her first lover, Lord M—, is ill, and requires her care.

Thus, alone, sad, and prostrate with a double grief, Calista goes one evening to the play. The "Fair Penitent" is to be acted, and she feels a bitter and tormenting pleasure in seeing once more all that decided her unhappy destiny. Her lover is

near her. What sorrow, what transports in that meeting! These two shipwrecked mariners, for a moment, indulge in the thought of flying from the scene of their miserable ruin. They have left the theatre — they stand alone, on a stormy night, in Saint James's Park — there is none to see, none to hear, there is not even the consciousness of day and heaven to check a guilty and desperate thought.

"Passing her arms around me, she said: 'What shall we do without each other? In half an hour I shall be as I was a year ago — as I was six months back — as I was this morning! What shall I do if I have still some time to live? Shall we go away together? Have you not obeyed your father enough? Have you not taken the wife he chose for you? — have you not got a child? Ah! let us resume our true ties. Whom shall we injure? My husband hates me; he will no longer live with me. Your wife no longer loves you. Ah! do not answer!' she exclaimed, putting her hand on my lips; 'do not refuse — but do not consent, either. I have only been unhappy as yet, let me not become guilty. My own sins I might bear, but not yours. I should never forgive myself for having degraded you. Ah! how unhappy I am — how much I love you! Never was man loved as you are!' And holding me closely clasped, she shed a torrent of tears. 'I am an ingrate,' she said, after a while, 'for nothing on earth would I give the pleasure I have felt to-day — I feel this moment.'

"The thunder was frightful now, and the sky seemed on fire. Calista seemed to hear and to feel nothing; but James, running up to her, said:

"'In the name of heaven, madam, come! — there are hailstones falling, and you have been so ill.'

"Taking hold of her arm, he led her to the cab, made her enter it, and closed the door upon her. I remained alone in darkness: I never saw her again."

He travels, and Calista dies. She dies forgiven by her husband, and almost loved by the father of her lover. She dies, not of love — it rarely kills — but of what is often fatal — a wronged love, a wasted life. She dies, and thus ends the tale. The lover's grief we never witness — we need not; we know what it will be — weak, tardy, though sincere. He is of those for whom was framed the old familiar phrase — 'Too late. Too late in love, in duty, in grief, in all that proves a man.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Madame de Krüdener.

THE life of Madame de Krüdener is one of the most curious psychologic studies within the whole range of biography. The subtlety with which this singular and imaginative woman slipped away from good into evil, and scarcely knew the difference; the rapidity with which she rose from evil to good, from the merest worldliness to the highest religious aspirations, and to some of the most noble of religious virtues, self-denial and charity, are such as almost baffle analysis. This mysterious faculty of escaping from harm, like a bird from the net of the fowler, certainly bespeaks an original excellence of nature. Why is it darkened by a shadow of insincerity, a shadow so strange and deep that doubt and mistrust, once wakened, can never sleep again, that we pause and question even whilst we needs must admire. We want the test known to the Searcher of all hearts alone, the touchstone that will tell us when to believe and honour, when to turn away with sorrow and pity.

We know, indeed, that the lives of human beings are all made up of complex materials, that warp and woof are seldom of equal value. Yet some do give us a fair or a solid texture; a web that will stand the wear of time, charm away censure by its splendour and beauty, or defy it by its sober strength. In Madame de Krüdener's life we look in vain for either. There is nothing to dazzle the imagination, nothing to conquer esteem. Her literary claims have been more injured than benefited by what we know of her. The kindness and charity that were substantial in her religion, have been obscured by what was visionary and unreal. She passed through life a mystic and a dreamer, and by her side walked the glorious illusions of prophetic gifts and divine revelations; but we might as well look at noonday for the mists of the morning, as now seek her trace in religious story. Her high birth and her rank, the friendship of a great sovereign in critical times, gave her a momentary importance in the eyes of her cotemporaries. On posterity Madame de Krüdener's claims are slight and chiefly literary. Her only good novel, "*Valérie*," is not an original work — it is but one of a

school; but as representing the feminine element in that school it is both valuable and interesting. Its own merits have long made it a popular story, apart from such considerations.

Barbe Julie de Wietinghoff was born at Riga on the 21st of November, 1764. Her father was descended from the Teutonic knights, her mother was the daughter of Marshal Munich. Both possessed great vigour of mind and energy of character. M. de Wietinghoff, though so proud of his ancient birth that he disdained titles, also scorned poverty. He became a commercial man, and was soon one of the wealthiest men in Livonia. His wife, a beautiful and remarkable woman, seconded him well. In the morning she was the most exemplary of housekeepers, and in the evening the most seducing of fashionable ladies. M. de Wietinghoff loved splendour and pleasure—he had a private theatre, which he afterwards sold to the town; but not before his example had borne its fruits, and many of the great people of Riga had launched into magnificence which ended in the ruin he was prudent and prosperous enough to avoid.

Julie's education was much neglected, rich and luxurious though her parents were. She was taught French and German from her infancy, and she had seen France, Germany, and England before she was sixteen, but she knew nothing. She was considered marriageable, however, and by the time of her return to Riga she was betrothed to a nobleman whose lands, being close to M. de Wietinghoff's, made Julie's father consider him admirably calculated to become her husband. She thought differently, but her feelings were not consulted. In her despair she turned to God and prayed for the first time. Heaven seemed to hear her. She took the measles, and long remained disfigured; the match was broken off, and two years later she was united to M. de Krüdener.

Julie was then eighteen; she was not beautiful; but extremely attractive. She had an exquisite figure, beautiful arms, beautiful fair hair and blue eyes, an expressive countenance and perfect grace, that charm beyond all others. M. de Krüdener was twenty years her elder. He was a man of education and taste, a diplomatist, and an agreeable man of the world; but he had not been fortunate in marriage. Julie was his third wife, and his two first he had divorced. Mademoiselle de Wietinghoff was not asked how she liked him for

a husband — but she did not pray against him; and she confessed later to her friend, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, that since she could not consult her heart, she was pleased to have found a man who could occupy her mind and gratify her vanity. She soon loved her husband passionately. In "Valérie," that tale which unfolds the best and purest portion of her youth, she has drawn him with much power and "grace." From his handsome and noble countenance to his calm though generous "heart," he is finely discriminated.

According to Madame de Krüdener, her husband had but one fault — he was ambitious; but his ambition was pure, and never interfered with duty. Many years after their marriage, when Paul the First was on the throne of Russia, M. de Krüdener was his ambassador at Berlin. He was giving a fête to his sovereign's daughter, the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg Schwerin, when he received despatches ordering him to declare immediate war on Prussia. The commands were unjustifiable and disastrous. M. de Krüdener resolved not to obey. He wrote to the Emperor, giving him his reasons, and steadily waited the event. His own ruin and that of his family, the loss of Imperial favour, Siberia perhaps, and a miserable exile, were among the probable consequences of his disobedience. For three weeks M. de Krüdener wore to all a smiling brow, and carried the weary burden of his secret; for three weeks he never slept, and lived in the fever of suspense. At length the dreaded answer came. The Emperor was in a gracious mood. He thanked M. de Krüdener for the beautiful fête he had given his daughter, and until his death he loaded him with favours and gifts. The storm was averted, and had left a cloudless sky, but the terrible anxiety of those three weeks helped to shorten M. de Krüdener's life.

Such a man, with his intellectual superiority, and the god-like calmness of his affection, was made to subdue, charm, and torment a vain and ardent girl. His heart was tranquil and somewhat wearied. Love to him was peace, to his young wife it was fever. Her silent, unheeded youth had at length found an object. More eager than wise, she seized on it with transport. M. de Krüdener had wished for domestic happiness; instead of the longed-for blessing, he got the doubtful one of passion. Both paid the sad penalty of unequally matched years.

But at first they were happy. Young love was welcome,

and calm love did not yet seem coldness. The Baron of Krüdener took some pains to cultivate his wife's natural talents. His efforts did not go deep, but they gave her the polish of a woman of the world. In 1784, her first child and son was born: that same year she was presented to Catherine the Second, at St. Petersburg, and she proceeded with her husband to Venice, where he represented the Russian Empire. A few years more, and Venice would cease to receive such Imperial visitors. Her palaces were to decay in her lagunes, her name was to be effaced from the golden book of nations. But then, if no longer great, she was still splendid. She gave to pleasure the days which had once been devoted to conquest and magnificent enterprise. She was the resort of the gay, the luxurious, and the wealthy: a very city of delights, soon to become a city of woe!

Madame de Krüdener's love for her husband was in all its fervour during this Venetian embassy. But it was too imaginative and too exacting an affection. She undertook long journeys to procure him fresh fruit and flowers, for which he cared little, and she thought him cold. He rode a spirited horse, and her terror found no sympathy with him. When he looked careworn, she wearied the vexed statesman with unreasonable fondness. Yet he loved her truly, with honour, fidelity, and strength; but twenty fatal years divided him from this young creature, more tender than wise. She could not reach his sad gravity, and he could not go back to her childish tenderness. When they went in spring to La Mira, a beautiful villa on the Brenta, Madame de Krüdener gave her husband one of those proofs of love which he particularly disliked. Alarmed at his not returning one stormy night, and convinced that he had perished in the swollen waters of the Brenta, she roused her servants and went to meet him. M. de Krüdener quietly returned, and he gently scolded his wife. "Alas!" she thought, "he would have gone to bed and slept!"

There is a contagious charm in love. The passion which M. de Krüdener received and returned so calmly, helped to waken in the heart of a beholder a passion which Madame de Krüdener, absorbed in her own feelings, did not suspect.

Alexander of Stakieff, M. de Krüdener's secretary, was so unfortunate, though most devotedly attached to his patron, as to fall desperately in love with his wife. He left Venice,

thinking absence the only cure; but they met again at Copenhagen — for, after eighteen months, M. de Krüdener was removed from the dying republic to Denmark. M. de Stakieff found the mistress of his heart lovelier than ever, still devoted to her husband, but not so fondly. She lived for something besides M. de Krüdener; she mixed much in society; she was young, lovely, and admired. A passion for flattery, and the love of display, had succeeded to love.

The shawl dance was one of her triumphs. We have two descriptions of that performance — one in “*Delphine*,” by Madame de Staël, who witnessed it later; the other in “*Valérie*,” by Madame de Krüdener herself. We give this first. It is the lover who speaks. “*Valérie* asked for a shawl of dark blue maslin. She parted her hair from her forehead, and put the shawl on her head; it fell down to her shoulders, concealing her hair, and giving her forehead the antique cast. Her lids fell, her smile faded away, her inclined head, her folded arms, that blue garment, and her pure, meek face looked like a painting of Correggio’s, meant for tranquil resignation; and when she looked up, when her lips tried to smile, she looked like Shakespeare’s *Patience* ‘smiling at Grief.’ Sometimes like *Niobe* she drew a stifled cry from my soul, torn by her grief. Sometimes she fled like *Galatea*, and my whole being seemed borne away with her light footsteps. No, I can give you no conception of my frenzy; when, in this magic dance, a moment before it ended, she fled, or rather flew round the room, looking round behind her, half timid, half afraid, as if pursued by love.”

Madame de Staël’s description is scarcely less enthusiastic.

“Never have grace and beauty produced a more extraordinary effect on a numerous assembly. This foreign dance has a charm of which nothing that we have seen can give a fair idea. It is a thoroughly Asiatic mixture of indolence and vivacity, of sadness and mirth. Sometimes, when the music became softer, *Delphine* walked a few steps, with head inclined and arms folded, as if memory and regret suddenly came and mingled with the splendour of the fête; but suddenly resuming her light and lively dance, she wrapped herself in an Indian shawl, which set off her figure, and fell back with her long hair, making of her whole person a most exquisite picture.”

M. de Stakieff saw clearly that the fond and innocent young wife he had known in Venice was altering fast. Yet his passion was still strong enough to make him leave Copenhagen. He wrote to M. de Krüdener confessing it, but adding a declaration which showed how ideal and pure was his love. "It is inexplicable, yet it is true, that I adore her because she loves you. If you could be less dear to her, she would become a woman like another, and I should cease loving her."

M. de Krüdener imprudently showed this letter to his wife. Her vanity was inflamed at having inspired a passion so romantic. Why should not other Alexander Stakieffs kneel and adore! She was in this dangerous frame of mind when, shortly after the birth of her second child, a daughter, her health compelled her to leave Copenhagen, in 1789. She went to Paris, ran up a bill of twenty thousand francs with Mademoiselle Bertin, the fashionable milliner, and then proceeded to the south of France. There she met with a M. de Frégeville, a handsome French officer, who saw her, loved her, and, unhappily, made her share his passion. He accompanied her to Germany, but she went alone to Denmark. She there told her husband all that had passed, and asked for a divorce. M. de Krüdener refused, and left her sorrow-stricken. She went to her mother's at Riga, and soon afterwards parted from M. de Frégeville at Berlin. He pursued his career as a soldier, and died a general. They met no more. This was the end of a passion to which Madame de Krüdener had sacrificed her husband's affection and her self-esteem. Not long after this she saw Alexander de Stakieff: a sad and humiliating meeting for both, and which was never renewed.

In the year 1792, Madame de Krüdener was reconciled to her husband; but happiness was gone for ever. She had grown restless, wilful, and capricious. Her husband could not prevail upon her to be punctual — a fault which, with her literary propensities, cost her the favour of Frederick William the Third of Prussia, at whose court M. de Krüdener was ambassador. She left him to travel: Germany, France, Switzerland, attracted her irresistibly. Once she went off without consulting her husband. He wrote her a sad and indulgent letter on this new separation, which his death made final. The news reached her in 1802, in Paris, where her

literary career had begun. Châteaubriand, Benjamin Constant, Madame de Staël, were her friends; Michaud and Bernardin de St. Pierre were both friends and advisers. It was in Paris that she completed "Valérie," begun in Berlin. For some time the grief and remorse caused by her husband's death made her forget all else. But time effaced those feelings. Lyons, to which she had retired, became narrow. Ashamed of returning to Paris, after having solemnly forsaken that city of pleasure, she took singular means of effecting her object — means which throw a sad light on the real nature of this subtle and uncompromising lady.

Madame de Krüdener could not exist without a court, and among her courtiers was a Docteur Gay, whose compliant temper induced her to entrust him with the following delicate errand. Docteur Gay was requested by Madame de Krüdener to write some prose or poetry in her praise, to address it to "Sidonie," the heroine of one of her tales, and cause it to be inserted in a newspaper. She told him what to say about her charms, her talents, her grace, her wit, and her shawl-dance. Vanity was not, could not, be her object. He knew her modesty; it was to be merely a summons to "Sidonie" not to bury such gifts in obscurity, but to return and adorn Paris with her presence. Docteur Gay complied. The elegy, as it was called, appeared. "Sidonie" was gratified. "The world is so stupid," she wrote to Docteur Gay, "that it is this charlatanism which brings one forward, and enables one to serve one's friends." The last hint is clear. But charlatanism is a two-edged sword. It is the chastisement of deceivers that they are deceived. The net they cast over others encloses them in its subtle meshes. This false praise intoxicated Madame de Krüdener. Speaking of Madame de Staël, she wrote: "I suspect the dear woman to be jealous; especially now that some of the graces, some of the charms of 'Sidonie' have been recognized in 'Delphine.' She liked me well enough formerly to paint the talent" (this is an allusion to the shawl-dance), "which she has drawn so well. But celebrity and too much success have made her grow cool."

Poor Madame de Krüdener! Thinking that Madame de Staël, one of the finest geniuses that ever wrote — one of the frankest, most generous, and least envious of women — could, in her own splendid and European fame, envy the

little murmur of renown that "Sidonie" awoke in Paris! Alas! why are letters kept when they contain such humiliating confessions?

Yielding to the ardent summons of her *unknown* admirers, Madame de Krüdener returned to Paris, writing letters to other friends, in which she expressed her own personal reluctance to enter once more on gay scenes of which she was weary. Yet it must be confessed there was always a sort of candour in her deceit. "You know," she wrote to her daughter, "that wit, genius, and good intentions do not suffice for success. There must be charlatanism in everything."

"Valérie" appeared towards the close of 1803. Madame de Krüdener had a splendid connexion in the Parisian literary world, and her own exertions were great. She drove about Paris several days running, and visited all the fashionable milliners to ask for ribands, coiffures, scarfs, and ornaments *à la Valérie* — an ingenious way of advertising a novel. After being a beauty and a woman of fashion, Madame de Krüdener became a popular authoress — for "Valérie" was a successful book, and though her other works are forgotten, they had their day. But a greater change was in store for her. She went to Riga to see her mother; and she was standing at her window one autumn morning, when a Livonian gentleman — one of her former admirers — passed by and bowed to her. In the act he staggered, and fell — a dead man!

A terror that verged on insanity took possession of Madame de Krüdener. Her passion for admiration rose before her as a deliberate insult to Almighty Majesty. The judgment of God seemed hanging above her doomed head. Night was odious to her; day was spent in strange fears. She would not leave the house lest death should overtake her beyond its limits. Her windows were closed, that the light of day might not remind her of existence. These terrors gave way to time, but a deep and settled melancholy replaced them.

It so chanced that she needed the presence of a shoemaker of Riga. She was struck with this man's happy and cheerful face, and could not help saying to him,

"Friend, are you happy?"

"The happiest of men," was his answer.

She made no rejoinder, but that reply haunted her the whole night long. The next morning she went to the shoe-

maker's abode, resolved to learn the cause of his happiness. The shoemaker was one of the Moravian Brethren. His discourse filled Madame de Krüdener with joy and peace. From that time forward she gave to God the ardour she had so feverishly bestowed on the world and its pursuits. We have now another woman before us — a mystic and a prophetess.

She was laughed at: it was natural that such a transformation should not inspire confidence or respect. Yet, sincere she certainly was, though her own estimate of her piety is not to be trusted. Madame de Krüdener was always a self-deceiver. To feel good and to be good she thought one. Her letters constantly betray this sad confusion. This most worldly of worldly women had convinced herself, and wanted to convince others, that "she liked simple and easy pleasures, quiet friends, and an even life." She carried those illusions to their farthest limit. In the fervour of her passion for M. de Fréville, she contemplated devoting herself to M. de Krüdener, to the kind and forgiving husband whom she forsook, and left to die alone. She could even unite sin and a sort of piety; the meanest artifices and the enthusiasm of prayer. She always considered herself specially favoured by Heaven, and attributed to that favour the affection the Emperor Paul showed M. de Krüdener after he had forgiven her. She thought it, and she wrote it to a friend: — "I say it in the humility of my heart — for you know I have no pride — could a Christian be proud? — I believe that God has wished to bless my husband since I have come back to him. He is laden with favours. Why should I not believe that a pious heart, praying to Heaven with simplicity and trust to help it to contribute to the happiness of another, should not be heard?" Such was always Madame de Krüdener's opinion of herself. She was a miserable sinner; she said it, but she also thought herself a chosen vessel of Heaven's mercies.

Yet this mystic part of her life, though full of errors, is singular and interesting. She had always been charitable, because she was both generous and kind-hearted; but when she had given herself entirely to God, His poor — that precious inheritance which is as the Kingdom of God upon earth, and which we so often despise or forget — became infinitely dear to her. She visited Germany in 1806. Prussia was distracted by a cruel war; the hospitals were full of wounded soldiers. Conquering her natural horror of pain and disease Madame de

Krüdener visited them assiduously. She thus met the Queen of Prussia, that beautiful and ill-fated lady whom the sorrows of her country sent to a premature grave. Madame de Krüdener's biographer asserts that a warm though brief and secret friendship was the result of this meeting.

From Königsberg Madame de Krüdener proceeded to Carlsruhe, and took up her abode in the family of Jung Stilling. Here, though she devoted herself to the poor, she found time for literary composition. She wrote "Othilde," which she read to Queen Hortense, and which, after its publication four years later, she thus commended to her attention through Mademoiselle Cochelet, "Oh! how you would like that work! It has been written with heaven. That is why I venture to say that there are beauties in it."

But she soon wearied of this calm existence and commonplace piety. Her life, as a woman of the world, had been remarkable for the substitution of her own will and pleasure to principle; and her life, as a woman devoted to Heaven, was to be singular for the substitution of her own impulses to the simplest exercise of judgment. With that valuable quality, Madame de Krüdener was, indeed, never acquainted. Many gifts she had, but this crowning grace of all was wanting.

Jung Stilling had imbibed some of the principles of Swedenborg. Madame de Krüdener seized on them with ardour. Her friend introduced her to the admirable Oberlin, the pastor of the Ban de la Roche, who is said to have been a seer, but whom the invisible world never took away from the plain and arduous duties of this life. Madame de Krüdener wanted a teacher more mystic and singular than this good man. She found him in Frederic Fontaine, a German pastor of French origin, who had the name of performing miracles, and who kept a somnambulist, Maria Kummrin, in his house. In one of her trances Maria foretold that Madame de Krüdener was to work many marvels in the kingdom of God, and designated Fontaine as her apostle. The state of mind into which this revelation threw Madame de Krüdener appears in the following passage of one of her letters: "In the true sense of the word, have I experienced miracles. I have been initiated into the deepest mysteries of eternity." If Madame de Krüdener was a dreamer, the pastor Fontaine was a practical man. An estate was bought in Würtemberg to found a Christian colony; but the king would not tolerate it, and

Madame de Krüdener and her friends were allowed twenty-four hours to pack up and leave his dominions. This was but the beginning of a life-long persecution. Wherever she went, in kingdoms or in republics, Madame de Krüdener found that prejudice and dislike had been before her.

Her reputation as a prophetess began at Baden in 1814. The Queen Hortense visited that watering-place in that year; with her was Mademoiselle Cochelet, her old friend and schoolfellow. This lady was sitting in her room, absorbed in unpleasant reflections on the fallen fortunes of the Bonapartes, when Madame de Krüdener walked in. Mademoiselle Cochelet was very much struck with the prophetic look of her visitor. Without seeming to notice this, Madame de Krüdener began to predict such heavy sorrows to Queen Hortense that Mademoiselle Cochelet exclaimed, "You frighten me! Why, what worse can happen her than what she has already undergone?"

"Oh! you do not know what a frightful year 1815 will be!" was the reply; "you think that the Congress will end. Be undeceived. The Emperor Napoleon will leave his island; he will be mightier than ever, but they who side with him shall be tracked, punished, persecuted. They shall not know where to rest their heads."

She spoke standing, and with vehement gestures. Her slight figure, her thinness, her flowing fair hair, her kindling eyes, had something supernatural that terrified the hearer. She called upon her after this, and saw another picture. Madame de Krüdener and her daughter lived in a small and lonely house near the Valley of Lichtenthal. In a poorly-furnished room there was but one ornament, a large wooden crucifix. It was early, yet mother and daughter had already devoted the morning to good deeds and charitable visits. A little meat appeared on their frugal table, but it was in honour of the visitor that they broke so far through their homely fare. Everything around them spoke mild charity and gentle peace.

It was in the course of the same year that Madame de Krüdener's connection with the Emperor Alexander began. She foretold that he was to accomplish great things, and her predictions took a more definite form in a letter, dated Strasburg, October 27, 1814, and addressed to a Russian lady, Mademoiselle de Stourdza. In this letter, full of the saddest

prophecies, occur the following passages: "We shall see guilty France, which, according to the decrees of the Eternal, was to be spared by the Cross that had submitted it, we shall see her chastised.... The storm is coming on those lilies which the Eternal had preserved — that emblem of a pure and frail flower that broke an iron sceptre — because the Eternal thus wished it; those lilies that should have called to purity, to love of God and repentance, have appeared to vanish." Towards the close of this letter, which Mademoiselle de Stourdza showed to the Emperor, Madame de Krüdener declared that she had much to say to him; but that her tidings were spiritual, and not political, is apparent from the terms she uses.

Alexander was very much struck with the fulfilment of Madame de Krüdener's prophecy concerning the return of Napoleon from Elba. He was watching alone, one night, at Heilbronn, and thinking how the whole work of coalition was to be done again; he took his Bible, and tried to read, but could not; then he thought of Madame de Krüdener, whom he had never seen. "Would she were here, and I could hear her!" Scarcely had the wish arisen, when Madame de Krüdener was announced. She seemed sent by heaven itself. Her language, severe and eloquent, deepened this first impression. Alexander was a mystic, and he led the life of a voluptuary. He was handsome, amiable, and too weak to be happy in his sins. Madame de Krüdener's severity calmed the sting of his conscience. For three hours he heard her unwearied. A calmer and a gentler speaker would have failed where she succeeded. Thus began the brief but powerful influence this singular woman possessed over a mind akin to her own, though far less ardent.

But others besides the Emperor Alexander felt the charm. There is something beyond beauty, and which remains when beauty goes: it is the indescribable gift which is called grace; a something in which mind, person, and heart have a share. When Madame de Krüdener was a young and pretty woman, at Barèges, it was enough for her to tie a handkerchief around her head for the man from whom she had purchased it to sell his whole stock. What she wore was becoming, and, later in life, what she said was winning and persuasive. Her enthusiasm, her ardour, were contagious. She preached love, and practised it with a charity that seemed boundless.

To this we may add that her doctrines had a latitude which world-weary or young and enthusiastic minds found sweet and attractive. On clear, straight-forward, and positive minds Madame de Krüdener had no hold, but she could charm even those who did not recognise her power. Madame de Genlis was very much struck with her, and was convinced of her good faith. She called her an extraordinary and interesting woman, "who said the strangest things with convincing calmness."

A curious and interesting conversation, which Madame de Krüdener had with the Protestant pastor, Maurer, in 1817, gives a fair account of her religious tenets, and of her estimate of her own mission. The divinity of Christ, and salvation through his merits alone, was the foundation on which she built. This, as opposed to the Socinian doctrines which then, as now, pervaded Protestantism, she called the Doctrine of the Cross. The cross she named the banner of Christians, and declared that they who had ceased to confess it by the bending of the knee, had forsaken it. The worshippers of Jesus gathered at the foot of the cross constituted the true Church, and acknowledged no spiritual supremacy save that of Christ; no law save His will. The doctrine of good works she reprobated, and declared that the true Church had ceased to exist since the third century. "She said that in the Roman Church the means of reconciliation between God and man, through the medium of Jesus Christ, had been well preserved, but petrified — without spirit or life — and that thus they were the work of Satan."

Of Protestantism she said: "But do you think I am a Protestant? Oh, no! I protest against Protestantism, which is but another deceit of Satan! I will quote, if you like, many passages from the New Testament against Protestantism."

An invisible church, which she called the Catholic, was the true one. That church and her own mission seem to have been one in her mind.

"I could prove my mission to you by all that the Lord has done to sanction it," she said; "He has caused me to predict events that have happened exactly as I said. Sick, pronounced incurable, have been cured at my prayer. With eighteen loaves, and a little barley soup, I fed nine hundred famished

persons. I prayed, and the blessing of the Lord penetrated this food, and rendered it sufficient."

M. Maurer, though not thoroughly convinced of the mission, was greatly touched with Madame de Krüdener's earnestness, eloquence, and amiable manners.

Her religion seems to have been especially faith in her own inspirations. She was a Protestant in her latitude of opinion, and a Catholic in some of her doctrines and practices. Veneration of the cross she held imperative. She told M. Maurer to kneel whenever he met one on his way. She assisted her own devotions with a crucifix; and she had frequent recourse to the intercession of that "Mary, full of grace," whom Protestantism has silently excluded. In one of her hymns, she asked her to pray "that the Lord might receive her in His mercy."

These mixed feelings helped to strengthen her hold on the Emperor Alexander. She could be everything to him, because she was nothing in particular. She followed him to Heidelberg, at his request. M. Empeytaz, a Genevese, who had embraced her tenets; her daughter, a beautiful and enthusiastic girl, and M. de Berckheim, her future son-in-law, assisted her in the task of guiding, spiritually, the head of the "Orthodox Church." After the battle of Waterloo, Alexander went to Paris. Madame de Krüdener again followed him, by his wish. She lived in a hôtel contiguous to the palace of the Elysée, Alexander's abode.

The friendship of a powerful sovereign, the new faith which she preached, the readiness with which she spoke to all who applied to her, soon drew crowds around Madame de Krüdener. The sceptical and mocking Benjamin Constant, who had survived his passion for Madame de Staël, and was undergoing the bitterness of a hopeless love for the most beautiful of Frenchwomen, came to Madame de Krüdener for comfort. Madame Récamier, the cause of all his torment, was not so readily admitted to the prayer-meetings at which Madame de Krüdener presided, and where Alexander was often seen. This bewitching beauty was entreated not to be quite so beautiful, lest mere mortal loveliness should distract the worshippers.

The Holy Alliance, not, indeed, the political part of that ill-named combination, but the project of placing it under the influence of religious feeling, was the most remarkable result of Madame de Krüdener's connection with the Emperor. The

original draft in Alexander's handwriting still bears Madame de Krüdener's corrections and erasures. The words "Holy Alliance" are in her hand.

If Madame de Krüdener had been an ambitious woman, she had found such an opening to power as might dazzle the proudest; but ambitious of political power she certainly was not. Alexander returned to Russia, and instead of following him, as had been agreed, she peregrinated through Switzerland, calling sinners to repentance, preaching, comforting, and relieving the crowds of famished poor, victims of the disastrous wars. Her progress through Switzerland is one of the most curious and interesting passages in her life. Such a tumult, social and religious, did it create, that she scarcely reached a canton or a city before the magistrates begged of her to depart. Hundreds and thousands congregated around her, and often followed her, claiming food, both spiritual and corporeal. Her zeal might well be offensive to many, but her boundless alms were no fit subject of reproach.

We cannot relate all the incidents that marked this part of Madame de Krüdener's career, but our task is drawing to a close, and of her charity we must speak once for all. It was both tender and magnificent, and we must search the lives of the saints to find anything like it. She was a rich woman, yet so far did her whole income go to the poor, that brown bread was often the only dinner to which she and her daughter, Juliette, sat down. She did more than feed the poor, she really loved them. Once seeing, in Carlsruhe, a young servant girl crying as she swept the hall and door-steps of the house, and learning that shame at having fallen from a better station to this menial office was the cause of her tears, she took the broom from her hand, and, whilst the girl stared amazed, she said, "There is no shame in it. The Virgin Mary was the daughter of many kings, and she swept; and the son of God many a time took the broom from the hands of his mother, to lighten her task."

The tender and generous spirit of the middle-ages is in that homely teaching. It is still more apparent in the following touching instance of sisterly love. Amongst the poor who came to her for relief, whilst she was in Switzerland, was a poor woman, whose face, half eaten by a cancer, made even the other poor shrink from her. Madame de Krüdener,

however, tenderly embraced her. Her daughter expostulated on the danger she thus ran.

"Do not scold me," replied her mother; "think for how many years this poor thing has been repelled by her fellow-creatures. She must know that Christians love their brethren."

Madame de Krüdener did not reach St. Petersburg till the year 1821. The amiable but somewhat fickle Emperor had ceased to wish for her society. He had got alarmed at her notoriety, and was displeased at the scandal caused in Germany by the Pastor Fontaine, with whom she had been so long connected, and whose hypocrisy and vices were at length apparent to the world, and to Madame de Krüdener herself. Her ardour in urging him to embrace the cause of struggling Greece, the crowds who congregated around her, eager to hear and learn, were also distasteful to the Emperor.

The result was a coolness, and a hint to moderate her zeal. But silence was irksome to her. She left St. Petersburg before the end of the year, and by a solitary life she prepared herself for death, which her failing health warned her to expect.

A milder climate was ordered for her; Princess Galitzin, her friend and admirer, who meant to found a sort of colony in her southern states, suggested the Crimea for a winter sojourn. It was reached after a long and fatiguing journey, but nothing could restore Madame de Krüdener's health, shattered by the unsparing exertions of twenty years. She expired on the 25th of December, 1824, in great peace and happiness of mind.

A few days before her end, she wrote to her son, in the following touching words:—

"What good I have done will remain, what I have done of evil (for how often have I not taken for the voice of God what was only the fruit of my imagination and my pride!) will be effaced by the mercy of my God. My numerous iniquities are all I have to offer God and man; but the blood of Jesus Christ will purify me from all sin."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Valérie."

GOETHE is said to have regretted that Madame de Krüdener, a Livonian by birth, should have written in French, and thus been lost to German literature. Apart from her merit, the great father of modern German fiction may have felt the flattery of such a work as "Valérie." There is indeed great beauty in this tale; and if it had not come after "The Sorrows of Werther" — if it had not evidently been suggested by that strange, feverish book — it would rank by right among the very highest works of its class. Yet an imitation it can scarcely be called, unless in one or two unfortunate respects, where it certainly does not improve on its model. It is founded on incidents in Madame de Krüdener's own life; on a pure and ideal passion which she had inspired; on the memory of her early married life, and of her happy years in Italy — on all that can give reality to a story; and it is worthy of remark that, whilst it is true, it remains almost faultless. Error begins when, wandering from truth, the author ventures on imitation.

It is, as we have already said, a beautiful story, told with exquisite delicacy and great skill; but there is no doubt that the impression "Werther" left on Madame de Krüdener's mind gave it its tone and form; and, without wishing to deny her feeling for nature, we doubt if her descriptions would be so impassioned or so melancholy had she not read Bernardin de Saint Pierre and Châteaubriand. The wondrous brilliancy and freshness of the descriptions in "Werther" — that sense of a broad landscape, or of a wild fountain-nook, which Goethe could convey in a few words — are wanting in "Valérie;" but if northern scenery is described at some length, it is finely painted, and the wild shores of the Baltic, or the soft landscape over which bends an Italian sky, alike appear before us as we read. In "Werther" the interest rests on Werther himself. Charlotte has bright lips and dark eyes, she is handsome and good-natured; but we never read very far into her heart, we see her but through her lover's passion, and his testimony we are inclined to doubt. Albert is cold and pedantic, and unpleasantly in the way. Werther, wild, mad, and guilty, alone interests. In "Valérie" the case is different.

A young, charming, ideal, and strictly original being moves before us. She undergoes no heavy trials. She loves one man, and is loved by the other, yet she interests us more than either, because she is more skilfully painted. She is also more amiable. Her husband, too, is a much better portrait than Albert. He is thirty-seven, an ambassador; and his calmness, his serenity, and quiet dignity, suit his position and his years. Gustave, the lover, is the weak character of the story. In vain he loves, suffers, and dies; we ever turn from him to Valérie, the innocent cause of all his woe. When she disappears, and we are left alone with him and his passion, we grow impatient and weary.

It is difficult to analyse this simple tale; for though it is told at some length, a few words comprise its chief features; and the history of a suffering heart, which moves when gradually unfolded, loses all its charm when it is at once revealed. The Count of M——, a Swedish nobleman, is appointed ambassador in Venice. The days of the Republic are not yet over — for the events of the tale take place in the last century. He travels through Germany and Tyrol with his young wife, Valérie, and his *attaché*, Gustave de Linar, who is also the son of an old and valued friend of his youth. Valérie is devotedly fond of her husband. He is handsome, accomplished, and good; and though he returns her tenderness, he returns it with a calmness which often grieves her, and which Gustave finds incomprehensible. In his eyes Valérie is both ideal and lovely. Young, ardent, and impassioned, Gustave venerates the Count as the first of men, but he adores his wife as the most enchanting of women. His filial love for the husband of Valérie, and his pure but tormenting passion for Valérie herself — a passion which daily intimacy feeds until it becomes a fever — the struggle between a friendship more powerful than duty, and a love all the more insidious that it comes in angel guise, are told with great simplicity, truth, and power, in his letters to an invisible friend in Sweden; for it is an epistolary novel, though Valérie herself — the charming, ideal Valérie — fortunately never pens a letter; and the heart of Gustave is laid bare before us from the unsuspected dawn of his ill-fated love to its close in the bosom of death, the final but sad comforter of all our sorrows. A languor of which he himself knows not the meaning, an impassioned sense of the wild, the beautiful in nature, a weariness of all

things, prepare him for a love deep, unreturned, and hopeless — a love which a lovely woman, devotedly fond of her husband, could best inspire; for the unhealthy restlessness of Gustave's mind is scarcely such as calm, innocent love could appease; and, charming though she be, we doubt if Valérie unwedded would have secured his feverish heart. The bond, the chain, the barrier, give activity and life to a love which liberty would probably have allowed Gustave to dream away.

Valérie, as he sees her with a lover's eye — pale, fair-haired, and ideal — is, however, an exquisite creature.

"I cannot better paint Valérie to you than by naming the young Ida, your cousin," he writes to his friend. "She is very like her; yet there is something in her I have seen in no woman as yet. It is possible to be as graceful as Valérie, and more beautiful than she is, and yet to be far from her. It is not so much that one admires her, as that there is in her something ideal and lovely which compels attention. She seems a thought, she is so delicate and so slight. I did not find her pretty the first time I saw her. She is very pale; and the contrast of her mirth, of her giddiness, with a countenance that seems made to express feeling, produced a strange impression upon me."

It is said to be dangerous to look at love, and that there is contagion in that fever of the heart. Valérie is ardently fond of her calm husband. They are travelling, he crosses a forest alone, and fears for his safety make her betray to her young and susceptible companion a passion of which he had not thought this mere girl capable. The depths of his own heart are stirred.

"This day only have I learned to know Valérie. Until now she had passed before my outward vision like one of those pure and graceful outlines bequeathed to us by the Greek, and with which we clothe our dreams; but I thought her soul too young, too unformed, to divine or feel passion. My timid looks did not venture to read her features too closely. She was not a woman with the empire which her sex and my imagination could give her over me — she was a being beyond the limits of thought. That veil of veneration and respect which there is between the Count and me extended to Valérie, and I did not venture to raise it, lest I should see but a woman like another. But this day, this very day, a strange event has taught me that her soul is both ardent and deep. Ay, nature

finished her handiwork; and, like those antique vases that fill us with wonder by their delicacy and whiteness, Valérie keeps within her bosom a subtle and ever-living flame."

This fair, delicate young creature of sixteen, whom even her lover discovers not to be faultless, but who is irresistibly winning, soon acquires deep but unconscious power over his heart. At first his love seems more the love of a poet than that of a common mortal. It revels in poetic images and fancies, some of them exquisite in their way. He is travelling with Valérie and the Count through romantic Italian valleys. They alight to visit some ruins, and they find themselves in a quiet cemetery. The delicious breath of an Italian spring is in the air. Valérie sits on a tombstone, and the breeze covers her with the white blossoms of some wild fruit-trees. Young, smiling, and gay, in this home of death, she looks, to the ravished eyes of her lover, "like a second spring, fairer, younger, than the first, and come down from heaven to this funereal place." Then wakens in his heart a voice full of passion and sorrow. Why must autumn ever come? Why must such lovely young beings ever die?

But human love was never meant to abide in such purely ideal regions, and Gustave's follows the common lot. The dangerous intimacy in which he lives with the unconscious Valérie and her noble, confiding husband — an intimacy which he endeavours to shun, and cannot — bears its fruits. In covert speech, which Valérie is too innocent to understand, he acknowledges that his heart is torn by an unhappy passion.

"'Yes, I love,' said I, hiding my face in my hands, that she might not read the truth there — 'I love a young girl in Stockholm.'

"'Is it Ida?' she asked. I shook my head to say 'no.'

"'But if it is a young girl, cannot you marry her?'

"'She is married,' I answered, with downcast eyes, and sighing deeply.

"'That is wrong,' she said, quickly.

"'I know it,' was my reply.

"'She seemed to repent having grieved me, and added:

"'And it is even more unfortunate than wrong. I have heard that passions inflict such terrible torments. I shall scold you no more when you are sullen — I shall pity you; but promise me to do your best to subdue your passion'

"‘I swear,’ said I, emboldened by the motive that guided me, and, taking her hand, I added — ‘I swear it to Valérie, whom I honour like virtue — whom I love like the happiness that has fled from me!’

"‘I thought I saw in her a reconciling angel, and I left her.’

Another time this dangerous conversation is renewed. The Count and Gustave have combined to fête Valérie’s birthday. Her joy has been complete, and her hand rests in that of the lover whom she thinks her calm friend. His eyes are fastened, with terror and grief, on the fatal wedding-ring which divides them for ever.

"‘What!’ I thought, ‘I too could have aspired to her! I lived in the same land, in the same province; my rank, my fortune, my years, everything drew me towards her. What prevented me from divining that immense happiness? My heart rose, and tears, bitter as my thoughts, fell on her hand.’

"‘What ails you, Gustave? Tell me what grieves you?’

"‘She wanted to withdraw her hand, but her voice was so touching that I ventured to keep it. I wanted to say to her — I know not what. But I felt that ring my torment and my judge. My tongue was frozen. I released Valérie’s hand, and I sighed deeply.’

"‘Why,’ she said, ‘why always be so sad? I am sure you are thinking of that woman. I feel that her image has haunted you to-day more than ever. This whole evening has taken you back to Sweden.’

"‘Yes,’ I replied, with a painful sigh.

"‘Is she, then, so lovely that nothing can make you forget her?’

"‘Ah! she has everything — everything that inspires strong passion: grace, shyness, modesty, with one of those souls impassioned for good, that love because they live, and only live for virtue. And yet, and by the most charming contrast, she has all that tells of dependence and weakness — all that claims support. Her delicate frame is a flower that bends to the lightest breeze, and her strong and courageous soul would brave death for virtue and for love.’

"‘Exhausted by the warmth with which I had spoken, I trembled as I uttered the last word, for I knew not myself how far my enthusiasm had led me. I dreaded lest she should have

divined me, and resting my head against the window-pane, I anxiously waited for the first sound of her voice.

"Does she know you love her?" asked Valérie, with an ingenuousness she could not have feigned.

"Oh, no, no!" I cried, 'I hope she does not. She would never forgive me.'

"Never tell her,' she said; 'it must be dreadful to inspire a passion that inflicts such misery. I could never be happy again if I had caused such a passion; but I do not apprehend it, and that consoles me for not being handsome.'"

Valérie speaks as she thinks, and, to Gustave's indignant surprise, this moderate estimate of her charms is shared by the Count.

"Explain to me, if you can, how it is possible to love Valérie, as one would love any other woman. I was walking yesterday with the Count, when we saw a lady standing by a shop of the Rialto.

"She is very pretty,' said the Count. I looked at her, her figure and the colour of her hair reminded me of Valérie. I wished to say she was like the Countess, but I dreaded lest my voice should betray me. However, as there was a good deal of noise on the bridge, and as he was not minding me, I said it.

"Not at all,' he answered, 'this lady is extremely pretty. Valérie has youth and expression, but no one will ever mind her.'

"His words pained me. Not that I required another to find her lovely, but it is hard to think that I love her with this violent passion, that she is for me all that is lovely and seducing, and yet to know that never, at any time, can I express to her what I feel! I did not dare to tell the Count how unjust I found him.

"At least,' I said, 'one cannot deny the Countess many virtues and a noble soul.'

"No doubt she is an excellent creature; she will be all that a woman should be in time, and when she has seen more of the world, she will even be very amiable.'

"What, Valérie! dost thou need something yet to be very amiable! . . . Can I then alone understand and appreciate thee, and shall that gift have been granted but to make me wretched? These sad thoughts absorbed me. I walked silently by the Count, and I thought, will man never know

how to prize the happiness bestowed by heaven? And is not this accomplished man, so well calculated to be happy by Valérie, is he not then to be more envied than another? Ah! why then must happiness be even as a delirium? Does not that passion through which love sees happiness degrade it? And do I not daily see the Count rendering Valérie the noblest homage, confide to her his future, tell her that she makes his life lovely, and want her as he wants pure air to breathe in! But though I reasoned thus with myself, I came back to the old conclusion, 'Ah, how much more truly I could love her!'

Vain thought! It is not he who is loved, it is the cold, calm husband. Gustave knows it, has known it from the first, yet exquisitely told is the scene in which that bitter truth comes home to him with power keen and new. The Count is in Venice, Valérie and Gustave are in a villa on the Brenta. As evening comes on the Countess orders her gondola; she will go and meet her husband. Marie, her maid, and Gustave, accompany her. It is a delicious spring evening, the moon has risen, the gondola glides softly on the waters. Reclining on cushions, Valérie sings carelessly, but with a voice that stirs passion from her farthest depths in Gustave's heart. It is an hour for love, and love is forbidden; and Valérie, unconscious of the torments she awakens, only thinks how to meet her will please and surprise her husband. The Count is well pleased to see her, indeed; but unpleasant despatches make him abstracted — he does not see the waves swell nor heed his timid wife's terror. She is seated by Gustave, and to him she whispers her fears; for a moment it seems to him as if her childish alarm and his own vehement passion had met and bound them in one feeling; but a wave lifts the barque, the wind rises, and Valérie throws herself on her husband's bosom. "Oh! how I felt my solitude, and all that divided us. The Count, full of public matters, only noticed Valérie an instant. He pacified her, called her a child, and assured her that no one had ever been lost on the Lagunes. And yet she was on his bosom, her heart beat near his, he could feel her breath, and he remained cold, cold as marble."

Absence, instead of weakening a love so fatal, only added to its fervour. The fever of his heart extended to his whole frame, after a separation which duty and honour commanded to be final. The Count, who learned the truth too late, only

reached Gustave's sick-bed to see him expire. His manly sorrow for the unhappy destiny of his adopted son, his narrative of those last sad hours, are told with much pathos.

"He said to Erich, 'Friend, look at the weather, and see if it will be fine.'

"Erich came back and said,

" 'The mists are rising, the mountains are clearing; it will be fine.'

" 'I should like to see another fine day upon earth,' said Gustave . . . He begged of us to draw his bed to the window, so that he might see the west.

" 'There lies Lombardy,' he said to me; 'there sets the sun. How many fine sunsets have I not seen with you, and with her!'

"He had his bed drawn nearer to the window. The doctor feared lest he should feel the morning air.

" 'It will hurt me no more,' said Gustave, and he smiled sadly.

"He begged of us to give him some cushions, that he might be seated. From the window one could see the wide chain of the Apennines. Dawn was breaking in the east, and the sun, which was already up in Tuscany, was advancing towards our mountains. Gustave pushed back the curtains, and gazed on the magnificent sight. I had read through all his feelings — dark presentiments, fearful images, froze me. I was seated on the edge of his bed; my head was buried in my hands. He raised his to heaven with an inspired look, and said:

" 'Let us leave grief to him for whom life is all, and who is not initiated in the mysteries of death.'

" 'Alas!' said I, 'the future terrifies me in spite of myself, Gustave.'

" 'Oh! how I bless heaven,' said he, 'for the hope and peace which meet in my heart, and make it as serene as this day will be! Yes,' he pursued — and the most heavenly look lit his face as he gazed on the horizon — 'yes; oh, my God! — dawn tells of day, and thus the secret presentiment tells of immortality.'

"He said no more. He asked for the magnificent hymn of Gellert on the Resurrection; Berthy played it. He breathed painfully. His eyes were closed; he opened them an instant

when the hymn was over; he held out his hand to me, and fastened his eyes on the west! Two tame doves perched on the window-sill; he motioned me to notice them.

"'They do not know that death is so near them,' he said.

"The sun was quite up; I saw that Gustave's looks sought its rays. His breath became more and more oppressed; his head grew heavy; his hand sought me — he no longer saw me. He sighed, a slight convulsion passed over his features — he expired in my arms, one of his hands clasped in Erich's.

"I resume my interrupted narrative. I wanted both strength and courage to pursue it. The saddest of images is still before my eyes — such as it struck me when I returned to that room which the most sublime and tender soul had forsaken. I long gazed on him, but without emotion. Grief seemed to pause before a thought loftier than all sorrow — and even with that coffin before me I felt future life in its fullness, and my soul spoke to his:

"'Thirsting for supreme happiness, thou hast turned thy lips away from the cup of life which could not sate thee; but thou enjoyest now the pure felicity of such as lived like thee! But, Gustave, Gustave! — canst thou feel, canst thou hear no more? The voice of grieving friendship cannot waken thee!' I pressed my lips on his frozen brow. 'Oh, my son! my son!' I could say no more. Motionless, I bade a long farewell to this dearly loved one. When I attempted to close the coffin, my look fell on Gustave's hand, which hung out loosely. He wore a ring with his crest on it, according to the custom of our country. I wanted to take it off — then, remembering that he was the last of the illustrious house of the Linars, 'Remain,' I said; 'remain, and go down with him to the grave!' My tears flowed, and I placed the hand on the bosom of the dead."

This is well and tenderly told, yet Gustave and his death are the fault of the story. We can believe in his love; we cannot understand that this love should consume him — that is weakness indeed. "Werther" is far more powerfully conceived. In the fulness of youth, with a heart which an exquisite sense of the warmth and beauty of nature has made but too susceptible, he sees a beautiful girl, betrothed to another man, and he falls in love with her, and yields to that love as if there were neither time nor sorrow in store for him. She marries

her betrothed; the once sweet cup is turned to bitterness — the world, too, is unkind and harsh — nature herself is faithless, and has closed her divine pages from the once impassioned gaze of her worshipper. Death alone is left, and death he seeks. Calmly, deliberately — ay, even though he has acquired the knowledge that, spite her virtue, Charlotte loves him — by his own hand he dies; and we feel that his mind was diseased with something more fatal than love for Albert's handsome wife.

But with Gustave it is not so. His ardour for nature is more unquiet by far than Werther's; love comes not to him in a vague yet happy mood — and the powerful contrast of an epicurean serenity with the torments of unhappy love is not here. Morbid, excitable, impassioned — and even weaker than impassioned — Gustave at once loves Valérie, and, loving in vain, he dies. Die he must, to be like Werther, and not wishing him to commit suicide, the author surrendered him to grief.

But the experience of life is against this conclusion. There are, and will be, strong passions to the end of time, but the weak, whom alone they could kill, are rarely privileged to know them. Imitation was here fatal to Madame de Krüdener; the real story was infinitely more beautiful than that which, with "Werther" in her mind, she wove out of it. The enthusiastic young man, who adored her with a passion which the sight of her ardent tenderness for her husband only strengthened, loved her better and more truly than Gustave loved Valérie. Virtue, and human weakness, compelled him to shun her sight, but her image remained in his heart as a lovely ideal, enshrined there until her errors taught him that all human divinities are idols made of clay. But sad, though, was that ending — the love was noble and pure, and how many a gentle thought or generous feeling may it not have inspired? How sweet a solace in sorrow, in hours of trial or endurance, may not her memory have been? Love so lofty is so rare that, when it is, it seems folly to set it by, and seek — what? — a shadow; for to die of love merely proves weakness. Werther knew it; he knew that death would never come, or he would not have shot himself!

CHAPTER XX.

Madame Cottin — "Amélie Mansfield."

A BEAUTIFUL and popular story has long been Madame Cottin's great claim on the reading public. "Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia," is still dear to the young of every land; whilst the impassioned and not always pure tales on which she may have rested her hopes of more enduring fame, are known, indeed, but comparatively not read out of France, and there but little.

We do not know much of this once celebrated writer's life, but what we do know reads a striking lesson on the mysterious difference which there is between an author and an author's works. Pure, religious, benevolent, and good, Madame Cottin deliberately wrote works which, though they recommended virtue in the abstract, preached nothing but passion and its transports in reality. Of their mischievous tendency she was conscious, and held all novels bad and dangerous, but she had not the fortitude to abstain from writing them; and by the time conscience and judgment gained this hard victory over what seems to have been an irresistible temptation, disease and death closed her short life.

Sophie Ristaud was born in the small southern town of Tonneins, of a respectable Protestant family. She was carefully educated at Bordeaux, under the superintendence of her mother, an intellectual woman. As a girl, Mademoiselle Ristaud was pensive, shy, and retired. She was considered to have judgment — the quality she most failed in — but her literary talent was not suspected. At seventeen she married M. Cottin, a banker, with whom she went to reside in Paris; and at twenty, after a childless but happy union, she was a widow.

France was then in all the gloom of her terrible Revolution. Madame Cottin passed her widowhood in a retirement which the tragic events around her rendered doubly congenial. It was then she began to write. Nature had given her a facility which often rose to eloquence, and the fever of those sad times imparted itself to an imagination which, perhaps because it lay concealed under a calm exterior, Madame Cottin had not been taught to control. She wrote "Claire d'Albe," one of her

most objectionable works, in a fortnight. The subject — a young, lovely, but guilty wife — was a strange one to be chosen by the widow of a husband both fond and beloved. But we think it gives the key to a secret, unacknowledged pain, of which there are traces in the whole of Madame Cottin's short life. Desire with her ever went beyond what even a happy life can grant; and the resentment of a deceived heart made her seek in the errors of imaginary beings that something more than the common lot which, not finding it upon earth, she had not, however, learned to seek for in heaven. The virtue she had in her own life she did not grant her heroines. She gave them her tenderness, and a weakness which was not hers. Their imprudence ended with disgrace and death, but there was a seductive charm in every step that led to ruin; and it was to trace this might of passion — not to show its fatal ending — that she wrote. But although "*Claire d'Albe*" was by no means a good book, Madame Cottin, by one of those subtle inconsistencies in her character, made it the means of a good action. A friend of hers was suspected by the ruling government. Suspected was then a significant word: it meant a prison, with the imminent prospect of a scaffold. Madame Cottin's friend wanted fifty louis to leave France: it was to help to make up that sum that she took her little volume to a publisher. We are not told how much she got for it. It appeared anonymously, and its success was great. It was praised and censured in the presence of the unknown author, who was charmed to hear this matter discussed so openly. "*Malvina*" and "*Amélie Mansfield*" followed it. In "*Amélie Mansfield*" Madame Cottin indulged herself in another favourite inconsistency — the censure of women who write. But she was known by this, and her friends, though not without difficulty, induced her to suppress the objectionable passage in a subsequent edition. It certainly was one of the most singular contradictions on record, that whilst, without any necessity save that of her own pleasure, she wrote herself, and persisted in writing, she should condemn so severely women whose motives were not less cogent than her own, and whose works, as a general rule, were far more pure.

The produce of those works, however, was devoted to charity and good deeds. To give was a want of her nature with Madame Cottin. Gifted with youth and some beauty, she, however, dressed plainly — almost meanly — to have

more left to bestow on the poor. She did more: to save money she resided away from Paris, in a dreary little village a few leagues distant from it. Yet with all that true charity and self-denial subsisted another wish — a want we might say, and one both deep and strong — that of being loved.

She could not resist friendship or love; both, if possible, she should have. Thus she was led into an affection with one of the most distinguished men of her times, and whose name, though it has been concealed by the editor of some beautiful letters of hers, it would be easy to give here, were it necessary to do so. But though conjecture almost amounts to certainty, we need not care to know too closely who the man thus favoured was. Her love for him was not love, but adoration, and few human beings can resist a test so severe. Intellectual and religious though he appears to have been, would he ever fulfil for us Madame Cottin's enthusiastic ideal?

"You fill my heart, my imagination, the world, space itself," she wrote to him in 1804, in the full fervour of their young love; "I see nothing but through you, I love nothing but after you, I have not a feeling that does not refer to you, I do not hear a conversation but I summon you to it; in all things I answer you — I act as you would wish me to act. In a word, I live but in you, so that I sometimes imagine you are as much in Paris as in the Pyrénées. Oh! my friend, how perilous would such love be if you were not its object!"

But the man so ardently loved could not, though free like her, become her husband. The marriage both had thought of, for a while, had to be relinquished. Madame Cottin foresaw a separation still remote, but which hung over the future like a dark cloud. "For a long time I have been turning my heart to God," she wrote to him, who had strengthened her enfeebled religious belief, "and God will perhaps fill it."

The doubt was justified by her own idolatry. Being present one day when grave and earnest men were deploring the looseness of the times, and one of them happening to say, "It is as if there were a vacant throne waiting for a ruler," Madame Cottin took hold of the words as prophetic, and wrote in her ardour: "'He is coming, he is coming, he whom you ask for,' I was tempted to exclaim, 'he comes to fulfil your desires, and sit on the vacant throne!'"

The lover does not appear to have found fault with this worship, but he was engaged on a great work — he had little

leisure for letter-writing, and left the task to his mistress. For some time her own love bore her on, and let her feel no void.

"Every enthusiasm has come back to my heart. Is your love the cause? Do I owe to you that fulness of life which oppresses me even unto pain? How explain those moments when my heart swells with a joy of which it knows not the cause, but that mingles something divine to all its emotions? I bless heaven that youth is leaving me, else I should be terrified at all the efforts I am told I should have to make in order to moderate the manifestation of my feelings in the world. I have always been accused of putting love in my friendship; no, it is not that, but an ardent heart spreads its ardour on all it touches. My friend," she pursues, alluding to some jealous feeling he had conceived, "what am I to do? You would be wrong to feel uneasy. Nothing is more impossible than that my tenderness for you should be weakened. I am yours, as the world is God's. I am your work, your property."

Madame Cottin was attractive; she had plenty of admirers, and she indulged herself in tender friendships, one of which displeased her lover. Pained by his suspicion, yet half pleading guilty, she wrote to a mutual friend, whom she called her adopted mother, and made the following frank confession, "I believe that with my last breath, at the moment of falling before the throne of the Supreme Judge, I shall still be keenly alive to the pleasure of being loved."

Yet not on this dangerous rock did they split. Madame Cottin had been reared with a cousin whom she loved with more than sisterly affection, and whose children she had adopted. This lady saw with little favour her cousin's passion; the lover, on the other hand, was jealous of a friendship so ardent, and Madame Cottin had to choose between the friend of her youth and the lover of her heart. Love was sacrificed to a friendship without which she could not live.

"A friendship like this," she said herself, "contracted in infancy, is sometimes less seductive, but is always stronger than love."

Her lover's jealousy, increased by a sense of the coldness to which his own had contributed, made him desire that their correspondence should cease, and the motive he gave for this was a very cold one. He wanted his whole mind for the great

work on which he was engaged, and her letters disturbed him. She obeyed, and her long farewell letter is a masterpiece of sweetness and love resigned and enduring. Submitting to the harsh sentence pronounced upon her, she says, gently, "Before I bid you farewell, let me tell you once more that I love you. . . . This morning, on arriving here, I found your letter. My God! I exclaimed, you alone are then left to me! But to my friend I owe this last, sweet, and strong asylum; and even when he thinks himself compelled to part from me, he does not leave me alone upon earth. Receive from her who was your Sophia, who has not ceased to be such, receive from her who loves you, and is going to tear herself from you, such blessings as none ever received before from a being of their own species, for no benefits can be compared to those I have received from you."

"Oh! my dearest, my truest friend! — if, in that long silence which will follow on a trust so tender, on hopes so sweet — if your thoughts seek me, and seek to penetrate my feelings, will you say: 'If she is calm, she owes her peace to me; if she smiles, it is that she thinks she will see me again in eternity.' . . . Take care, my friend, that you are not wearying too soon. A friendship like ours is not so mean a good that it must not be purchased at some cost. Believe me, let us not thus give up our treasure. The time is coming when we can enjoy it; a few years more and we shall have acquired the right of being friends!"

Then breaking off, after alluding to her cousin, she thus ends this sad and tender farewell: —

"Let that pass; this must be my last letter. Let me once more weep over my loss with you, and press you on a heart all yours. And now adieu! — adieu, my friend, my benefactor, my brother! Be careful of your health. Spare me the terrible grief of knowing you to be ill. Watch over yourself. I ask it in the name of that tender love which had chosen you alone, amongst all the men whom I have known. Adieu! even in separating we fulfil our destiny — we do not cease being united; and we shall meet in the bosom of our common Father, our mutual refuge in this separation."

Thus ended Madame Cottin's great love; and as we read her last letter, so tender in its farewell, we are tempted to ask: Is this, indeed, the inevitable destiny of love? Is there no

other end than this to that terrible and divine feeling which can be the curse or the blessing of a human life?

Madame Cottin did not long survive this separation, which was final. After a severe illness, patiently borne, she expired, on the 25th of August, 1807, in the thirty-fifth year of her age. Her two last works, "Mathilde" and "Elizabeth," were her purest and her most popular productions — the last especially. She left two other works unfinished — one on the truth of Christianity proved by the feelings; the other was a novel on education, from which she expected "the only fame," she said, "that a woman could wish for." In that hope she was disappointed; for if that unfinished work still exists, it has never been published, and probably never will.

"Claire d'Albe," "Malvina," "Amélie Mansfield," "Mathilde," and "Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia," are Madame Cottin's five novels. Passion, eloquence, and tenderness are their great characteristics. "Amélie Mansfield" is the best in a literary point of view; "Elizabeth" is the purest. "Claire d'Albe," besides its faults of taste, is an indelicate picture of a guilty passion; "Malvina" is a copy of "Rash Vows," and is far less probable than that improbable story. The heroine of "Rash Vows" pledged herself to widowhood — not an uncommon resolve; "Malvina" vows not to marry, in order to adopt the child of her friend — an exaggerated test, to which friendship is rarely put. She breaks her own vow, and her husband's infidelity is her punishment. The tale has some graceful pictures, but not much merit. "Mathilde," an historical romance of the old school, is still popular with the ignorant and the young. Passion, the Arabian desert, a beautiful Christian princess, a chivalrous Arab Prince, the names of Saladin and Cœur de Lion, cover every deficiency. Some passages in this tale display great power and possess great beauty; but, as a whole, it is weak, and it belongs especially to an utterly conquered school — that of historical romances before the days of Sir Walter Scott.

So far as incidents and the painting of the feelings are concerned, "Amélie Mansfield" is the *beau idéal* of an impassioned story. It has deficiencies, moral and literary; but, as a tale of ardent, ill-fated love, admirably constructed and eloquently told, it is unrivalled; and if these merits were paramount, instead of being, unfortunately, secondary, it would still be a matchless story. But Madame Cottin's faults

are all of the fatal kind; she wrote from the fulness and tenderness of her heart; feeling hid human nature from her view. Love is her hero and heroine, her primary and subordinate characters — hence a monotony which we have not leisure to notice as we read, but which we remember when we close the book.

Passion, too, is exaggerated — it is all of the wild, fierce, tragic kind; and sentiment is unpleasantly sweet. The bad, dangerous, seductive passages are the best, and we are interested in what we most condemn. The style is sweet, flowing, and easy; but, save when it speaks the language of the heart, it never rises high. In short — and spite its faults and merits — this tale essentially fails in that something which, whether it be power in the characters or in the telling, every true novel must possess to live. “*Amélie Mansfield*” lasted thirty years, and is not forgotten yet; more, spite some charming qualities, it must not claim.

The story is admirably calculated to interest, and does not flag for a moment. The subject was so fortunate in its perplexities, and these were so artistically dealt with, that it could not fail to lead on a reader.

The Count of Woldemar, a haughty Saxon noble, was so deeply impressed with the importance of nobility in general, and of the Woldemars in particular, that he took more than usual care to secure his descendants from the perils of a *més-alliance*. By his will he appointed his grandson Ernest his heir and successor, on condition that he should marry his granddaughter, *Amélie de Lunebourg*, and disinherited whichever of the two should venture to disobey his behests. The two children, though brought up together, disagreed and quarrelled, and had to be separated. Ernest was sent travelling; and, whilst he was away, *Amélie* fell in love with and married her drawing-master, *M. Mansfield*. After a short and not happy union her husband dies, and, discarded by her haughty family, *Madame Mansfield* accepts the home which *M. Grandson*, her late husband’s uncle, offers her and her child in Italian Switzerland, near *Bellinzona*.

On a tempestuous night a traveller, rescued by guides whom *Amélie*’s prayers and tears sent forth to save him, is brought to *M. Grandson*’s hospitable mansion. This traveller, *M. Semler*, has sprained his ankle, and cannot be removed. He is handsome, brave, heroic, but eccentric. He cannot look

at Amélie without emotion: and with a sincerity which is scarcely well-bred, he confesses that he detests children, and repels her Eugène with something more than coldness. Amélie is hurt, surprised, yet involuntarily drawn towards him. It is not love, of course — it is friendship; but who had ever imagined friendship to be so delightful? The traveller's letters to a bosom friend tell us his secret. His name is not Henri Semler — it is Ernest, Count of Woldemar. He came to take a mean and cruel revenge on the woman who had once dared to slight him, to make himself loved and forsake her; and she saves his life, and he is conquered, and adores what he once detested. He adores her, yet he never means to marry her; he will not succeed M. Mansfield in her heart; he will not become the father of M. Mansfield's child; above all, he will not, he dare not, so mortally offend his imperious mother as to unite himself to the hated Amélie. Honour, pride, filial duty, are arrayed against passion. There is eloquence, but there is also exaggeration, in the struggles which Ernest endures. He is weak and dishonourable to the last degree, and, untaught by sad experience, Amélie is strangely imprudent. She becomes the mistress of a man who confesses he is not what he seems, who refuses her hand when it is offered by her uncle, and he leaves her guilty and disgraced, hiding himself behind a feigned name.

Placed between the woman whom he really loves and his imperious, haughty mother, Ernest is true to neither. He forsakes Amélie to save his mother's life, and when the betrayed woman follows and discovers him, and dies broken-hearted, he dies too. Weakness, shameful weakness, fills and crowns his life. Yet he is represented as a strong, heroic character, just as the feeble, indiscreet Amélie is represented as virtuous. The blame which attaches to both is put on the noble passion of love; and how is that passion represented? Impetuous, tyrannic, a torment, and a curse!

"Amélie Mansfield" and "Claire d'Albe" were Madame Cottin's literary sins — "Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia," was the atonement. In every land this lovely story has been read, in every land it has shed its gentle and holy charm. The filial love, the patient, weary journey, the triumph and the joy of the end, are world-known. They are blended with our recollections of childhood or of youth, and have given to Madame Cottin's name a spell which will not soon depart.

CHAPTER XXI

Madame de Staël.

THE eighteenth century, so remarkable for having nursed and brought forth the greatest revolution the world has beheld since the religious convulsions which followed on the close of the middle ages, is also pre-eminent as being the most intellectual century France has known. She had more genius in the preceding age, but she had not in an equal degree that keenness and activity of mind which ended in the wildest of social theories, and in the most terrible negation of social authority. Until the result came — a result which had its good as well as its evil aspect — that intellectual fervour was full of enchantment. Women, who, if they were not always remarkable themselves, had the art of gathering and keeping around them men of mind, science, and genius, held assemblies, which passed under the significant though not always correct name of *Bureaux d'Esprit*. They were something more, assuredly. They were *bureaux* in which science, religion, abstract politics, literature, and history were debated with more passion and ability than fairness. They were dangerous, for they spared nothing; but they form one of the most curious chapters in the history of the human mind. They show us how, through nearly a hundred years, men born to act could make it the business of life to think, and especially to talk. Speech seemed their object, and, for a long time, speech alone seemed likely to be the end of these meetings.

The most remarkable *Bureaux d'Esprit* were those of Madame de Lambert, one of the earliest, and about which we know little — of Madame de Tencin, Madame Geoffrin, Madame du Deffand, Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, and Madame Necker.

Madame de Lambert was amiable, polite, virtuous, and well-bred. What Madame de Tencin was we have seen. Madame Geoffrin did not know how to spell, but charmed the fastidious Walpole with her admirable good sense. Madame du Deffand, his friend, was blind, witty, selfish, and ill-tempered. Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, unfortunate and impassioned. Madame Necker, the best, the most virtuous,

save Madame de Lambert, was esteemed, admired, and found dull.

Mademoiselle Curchod, daughter of a Protestant pastor of the Pays de Vaud, had received a classical education from her father. She was handsome, amiable, and won young Gibbon's heart. But they did not marry; another husband and another fate awaited the young girl. She came to Paris, was seen by Necker, and became his wife. Never was husband so fond, nor wife so devoted. Necker, a Genevese and a Protestant, became an eminent banker, then a minister, and, for a time, the idol of France. He was honest, well-meaning, and disinterested. He thought to save France, and France long thought she could be saved by him. His wife's salon had prepared his fame, and was used by her for that purpose. The men whom she drew around her felt they were but the stepping-stones of Necker's greatness. Yet they liked her, for she was good, but she never acquired the tact and finesse of a Frenchwoman, and especially of a Parisian. Her husband was respected for his sterling qualities, but he had a power of sarcasm which was rather feared. He used it seldom, and was generally as silent as a guest in his wife's drawing-room. Such were M. and Madame Necker, when, on the 22nd of April, 1766, was born their only child, Germaine.

Childhood is the key to after-life, and this truth, trite though it be, must not be forgotten when we speak of Madame de Staël. If we want to understand her faults, her virtues, and even the bent of her genius, we must examine attentively what her childhood was.

Madame Necker was learned, religious, and austere; her temper was thought cold; in reality, she was an impassioned and ardent woman, but she had early learned the severe task of self-subjection, and her manners were formal. The education she gave her daughter was a compromise between what she wished her to be, and what a precocious and unusual acquaintance with French society was likely to make her. Madame Necker was a Protestant, and her daughter, instead of being reared in a convent, remained with her, received a classical education like herself, and grew up surrounded by the heterodox philosophers and authors whom, with all her piety, Madame Necker drew around her. Only a large, generous nature like Germaine's could resist such unchild-like training. One who saw her in her youth, and who being young

herself, saw her without disguise, has left a curious and characteristic account of her at the age of eleven.

She was lively and merry, but precocious; her pleasures, like her studies, had nothing to do with her years. Neither her face nor her person gave promise of beauty; her complexion was swarthy, her features were irregular, though mobile and full of expression, and her large dark eyes were what they ever remained — magnificent. Mademoiselle Huber was introduced to her as a friend and companion. Germaine received her with transport, promised to love her for ever, and she kept that childish promise, which after-years so often break; then questioned her concerning her studies, wished to know what foreign languages she was learning, and if she often went to the play. Mademoiselle Huber replied that she had only been three or four times to a theatre. Germaine promised to take her, and suggested that on their return they should write an account of whatever play they had seen, and note what had struck them in it. It was her habit she said. She also proposed that they should write to each other every morning.

Young though she was, Mademoiselle Huber was struck with the fervour and the eloquence of her new friend. She was also edified to see how that friend's conversation and intellectual gifts were already prized by the rulers of the French society. A wooden stool was placed by Madame Necker's arm-chair in the drawing-room — this was Germaine's seat. Scarcely had she taken it, when several grave-looking men came up to her. One of them took her childish hands in his, and talked to her as gravely as if she had been five-and-twenty. This was the Abbé Raynal. The others, who likewise addressed her with every mark of interest, were Thomas, Marmontel, Grimm, and the Marquis de Pesay.

At dinner, Germaine was silent, but she listened with the face of one who understood every word that was uttered. Nothing appeared to escape her quick comprehension, not even politics, arid though they usually seem at that age. More guests came after dinner. No one approached Madame Necker without saying something to Germaine. The most remarkable men, especially, seemed to delight in her conversation. They liked to attack, provoke, and, if possible, perplex her. They questioned her concerning the books she had read, and recommended others to her notice.

If Madame de Staël was thus courted in her childhood, and if at eleven her conversation was already so attractive, need we wonder that she cared little for the pleasures of her years, and that only one amusement — and this was forbidden her — is recorded as having pleased her. This was to cut out paper kings and queens, and make them act tragedies by stealth, since she was not allowed to do it openly. Hence she derived, it is said, the habit of twirling in her fingers a strip of paper, or a twig stripped of its leaves. Without this slender sceptre in her hand, her eloquence forsook her.

With such an education, no clever girl could fail being an author early — and Germaine was more than clever. She wrote portraits and panegyrics, and commented "*Montesquieu's Esprit des Lois*" — a brilliant but most ungirlish book. Her very first attempts were remarkable for that vigour of thought and style which ever distinguished all she wrote. The Abbé Raynal acknowledged her power, by wanting her to contribute a chapter, on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to his great work — a request she did not comply with. When Necker's "*Compte Rendu*" appeared, Mademoiselle Necker, then fifteen, sent him an anonymous letter which its style at once betrayed to her father.

Yet this precocious taste for literature received no encouragement from M. Necker. He liked women to be accomplished and intellectual, but he did not like them to write. At his request, his wife gave up composition, and only indulged herself in fragmentary writing; M. Necker could not endure to think that his presence should ever be considered an interruption to his wife's literary labours. His daughter, aware of his feelings, and loving and respecting him too deeply to disregard them, took the habit of writing anywhere, or anyhow, standing, and with no better desk than such as the corner of the marble mantelpiece afforded. Thus M. Necker never witnessed the effort; he saw the result, and, spite all his prejudices against female authorship, that result was too splendid not to conquer his opposition.

Madame Necker, however, was disappointed in her daughter's education. Close study proved so injurious to Mademoiselle Necker, that it had to be interrupted when she was fourteen. She was sent to her father's country-house at Saint Ouen, to recruit her failing health. In this pleasant retreat she enjoyed herself greatly with Mademoiselle Huber; the

two girls assumed the attire of nymphs and muses, and acted, or rather improvised, plays, dramas, and tragedies in the open air. From the calm and severe world of learning, Germaine had escaped into the enchanted realms of imagination; and, to Madame Necker's mortification, the fugitive never fairly returned. All her daughter's brilliant gifts and genius could not console her mother for the deficiencies which this interrupted discipline had caused; and to a lady who expressed her admiration of Mademoiselle Necker's wit, eloquence, and intellectual power, she coldly and sincerely replied: "All that is nothing — nothing at all — to what I wished to accomplish."

Madame de Genlis, writing of Madame de Staël, after her death, also came to a similar conclusion, which, indeed, was frequently heard from her in conversation: "Often, in thinking of her, I have regretted that she was not my daughter or my pupil. I would have given her good literary principles, just ideas, and simplicity; and with such an education, and her fine mind and generous soul, she would have been an accomplished woman and the most justly celebrated authoress of our times."

Madame de Genlis would certainly have been a better literary instructor than Madame Necker. Spite that lady's classical education, her taste was not good. She could not write simply and clearly. Her thoughts and her style may be reckoned among the curiosities of literature. She was a true and good woman, but she was a bad and affected author. It is not easy to say how far, had they stood in the relation of teacher and pupil, Madame de Genlis and Mademoiselle Necker might have agreed. But Germaine was young, ardent, and impulsive — Madame de Genlis was clever, supple, and insinuating; she was passionately fond of teaching, and knew how to win the very heart of youth. Madame Necker, on the contrary, was cold and austere; she was capable of passion only where her husband was concerned; and with all the dogmatic authority of the teacher and the parent, she had none of the gentleness and the charm which both require.

M. Necker once said of his wife, whom he always loved most tenderly, "that, had it been possible to forgive her anything, she would have been thought thoroughly amiable." This faultlessness Madame Necker did not owe to nature. It was the result of sincere piety, principle, and strong will;

hence, perhaps, though no one could think her insincere, she was never much beloved — and hence, too, her tacit but life-long differences with her daughter.

Madame Necker checked and repressed in almost everything a nature that required to be ruled indeed, but not quite so closely. Germaine was gentle, but she had impassioned and even exaggerated feelings. She could not hear her parents praised without bursting into tears; the mere thought of seeing some distinguished person gave her palpitation of the heart; but the most singular proof of this dangerous precocity is that which Gibbon suggested. When he came to Paris during Germaine's childhood, he visited his old love, and was kindly received by both M. and Madame Necker. The child saw how much her parents valued his conversation, and conceived the strange project of securing them this gratification by marrying him. She was ten, and gravely made the proposal to her mother.

Surely the child who could think, feel, and talk so unchildishly, ought to have been taught, rather than checked, how to cut out paper kings and queens, if needed. We have already said that she did it by stealth; she did more, she read "*Clarissa Harlowe*," a forbidden book, in spite of the prohibition. Madame Necker had a nervous complaint that compelled her to stand and walk rather than sit. She gave Germaine her lessons whilst she was pacing the room up and down. When her back was turned "*Clarissa*" was opened, when she came back the book vanished, and thus the goodly volumes were gone through. No wonder that when later in life she gaily confessed this, Madame de Staël added: "The elopement of *Clarissa* has been one of the great events of my youth."

With that youth, disobedient and imaginative, Madame Necker had little sympathy; and if Germaine had a larger and more generous nature than her mother, it is also true that she had not, and did not wish to have, her mother's virtues. She rejected control, thought freely on most subjects, and trusted to her impulses, as if impulses, though amiable, could ever guide the wayward human heart. A sad and not commendable feeling on either side, jealousy, widened a breach which found no vent in words, but was none the less felt and seen by all who knew both.

Few husbands and fathers have been adored as Necker

was. It is almost calamitous to a man's fame to inspire so vehement a feeling. Madame and Mademoiselle Necker idolized him, and both proclaimed their worship to a world that cares little for domestic adoration. Its heroes are sunlit and magnificent; they stand raised on a pedestal, far above the calm, shady regions of private life. If we get glimpses of goodness, of tenderness, and suavity, so much the better; but they must be no more than glimpses, and moreover the fame that calls our look to that privacy must be unique and unquestioned. Such is not Necker's; he had his day of popularity and pride, but that day has left few traces in history. The nation that hailed him with rapture turned from him to the impassioned eloquence of Mirabeau, and from him to the teachings of the scaffold. Necker was a great man for a few hours, in the dawn of a day that filled Europe, as well as France, with horror, and that closed with the gigantic power, the despotism; and the fatal greatness of a Napoleon. Whatever his gifts, whatever his virtues, mediocrity has now set her seal on him, and posterity will scarcely revoke the decision. But thus did not judge his wife and daughter. He was not merely an admirable husband and father in their eyes, he was the one man to love and adore. Germaine's conversation was eloquent and delightful, and Madame Necker could not see how much her husband delighted in it without feeling that she had lost something in a heart which once was hers undivided; on the other hand, Mademoiselle Necker loved her father too passionately not, to feel a sort of jealousy of his wife, even though that wife was her own mother. That Madame Necker was jealous of her daughter, Madame Necker de Saussure acknowledges, tenderly though she deals with her; and Madame de Staël, who wrote her father's private life, has frankly confessed her own feelings. Speaking of his solitary youth in Paris before his marriage, she makes these strange remarks:—

"Sometimes talking with me in his retirement, he went over that time of his life, of which the memory moved me deeply—a time when I imagined him so young, so amiable, so solitary; a time when our destinies might have been united for ever, if fate had made us cotemporaries!" And farther on, alluding to his marriage, to his tenderness for his wife, and to that lady's virtues, she adds, "She wanted the unique being, she found him, she spent her life with him; God spared her the

misery of surviving him: peace and honour to her ashes! She deserved happiness more than I did." Surely the law that prohibits passion, even in our best and purest feelings, never proved its wisdom more effectually than in a case like this. A pure and sincere love for an excellent husband and father nevertheless contributed to divide a noble-minded woman like Madame Necker, and a generous one like her daughter.

Thus, revering her mother, but adoring her father, grew up Germaine, an eloquent, impassioned, and brilliant girl, whom some beauty would have made queen of all hearts.

A man of many accomplishments, who broke the heart of Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, to whom she addressed those strange, impassioned letters which were written in the very fever of love, and who died himself of wounded pride — M. de Guibert — is said to have been bewitched by Germaine Necker. Under the name of Zulmé he thus painted her in the fervour of her youth. Setting aside the inflated taste of the age — and it must be confessed it was especially that of Madame Necker and her circle — this portrait gives us a singular and powerful impression of what Germaine Necker was in her youth: —

"Zulmé is only twenty, and she is the most celebrated priestess of Apollo. She is the favourite of the god . . . From amidst the sacred maidens one steps forth. My heart will ever remember it. Her large black eyes beamed with genius; her hair, the colour of ebony, fell on her shoulders in waving locks; her features were more characteristic than delicate; they told of something beyond the destiny of her sex. Thus might we paint the muse of poesy, or Clio, or Melpomene. 'Here she is! here she is!' all cried when she appeared, and breath seemed gone."

The priestess sings to the accompaniment of a gold and ivory lyre; then, laying it by, she talks "of nature, of the immortality of the soul, of the love of freedom, of the charm and perils of the passions."

"I hear her — I look at her with transport — I see in her features charms beyond beauty. How varied and expressive is the play of her countenance! What shades there are in the tones of her voice! How perfectly do thought and expression agree! She talks, and, even if her words did not reach me, her tones, her gestures, her looks, would have made me understand her. She ceases a moment, and her last words echo in my heart, and I see in her eyes what she has not yet

spoken. She is wholly silent, and the temple is filled with applause. Her head bends modestly, her drooping eyelids veil her eyes of fire, and the sun seems gone from us."

Highly-coloured though this portrait is, it only does Made-moiselle Necker justice. She had a swarthy, mulatto-like complexion, strongly-marked features, a full projecting mouth, and a masculine appearance. These disadvantages were more than balanced by fine eyes, and what Benjamin Constant called her magnificent look, a countenance full of passion, feeling, and tenderness, a voice full of music, and an eloquence so rare that it surpassed the literary fame she acquired later. "If I were queen," said Madame de Tessé, "I would order Madame de Staël to talk to me for ever." It is only by the effect it produced on others that we can now even remotely conceive what that magic gift was like. Madame Necker de Saussure, her relative and adopted sister, says there was something heavenly in her language, and that her conversation in the *tête-à-tête* was more than could be imagined. "Everything with her sprang from the heart," she says — "even thought;" and elsewhere she confesses that all her feelings — friendship even — had the vehemence and impetuosity of love.

There lay the charm; life was ardent and strong in her. She felt deeply. There was passion even in her intellect, a power to enjoy and suffer in her whole being beyond the usual lot. Gifts of mind and heart which we often see apart blended in her, and with them the rare and lovely power of clothing feeling and thought in language eloquent and true. The fascination she exercised was unrivalled: it was that of a genius and a woman. She dazzled first, then she captivated. The spontaneousness of her feelings, the frankness with which she expressed them, her vivacity, wit, eloquence, and power of argument formed a rare combination of all that can amaze as well as charm a listener.

In his analysis of her power — and he wrote when he had ceased to love — Benjamin Constant has been both penetrating and minute. The sweet smile, the expression of goodness, the simplicity of manner, the absence of all coldness, affectation, or awkward reserve, the frank and graceful flattery, and the inexhaustible variety of conversation which dazzled, drew, and conciliated whosoever approached her, are carefully noted by one who had felt all their seduction.

"I know no one," he adds in conclusion, "who is more convinced of her own immense superiority over every one, and with whom that conviction is less felt."

That superiority, which consisted more in the union of rare gifts than in one particular power, was also more personal than literary. We may now judge her by what she did; her cotemporaries saw chiefly what she was. But if at all times Madame de Staël's intellect was superior to her writings, eloquent and powerful though these were, in her youth the difference was very striking. Before she was twenty she wrote a comedy in verse, of little merit; and two tragedies, one of which, "*Jane Gray*," alone was published. It is cold, and gives little promise of future fervour. Some tales in prose, and far superior to her poetry, she also composed, but they were not published for many years, and she was more known as a remarkable girl than as an authoress when she became M. de Staël's wife.

The Baron of Staël-Holstein was a middle-aged man. He was a Swede, and he represented his sovereign at the French Court. He gratified M. Necker's ambition, for he was a noble; and Madame Necker's feelings, for he was a Protestant. He admired Mademoiselle Necker; she felt no aversion to him; and, happy to please her parents, she married him, on the understanding that he was to remain ambassador in France, which his sovereign promised, and that he would never insist on her leaving M. and Madame Necker. Thus, at twenty, she became his wife. A cold destiny for one who never ceased to feel a woman's only perfect happiness — love in marriage.

That happiness she could scarcely have anticipated in such a union. Perhaps that consciousness of her personal deficiencies which once made her say she would give half her wit to possess the form and features of Madame de Simiane, a beautiful but foolish lady, made her relinquish all hope of being loved. Perhaps, too, the wish of being a Baroness and an ambassadress may have been an inducement with one whom all her judgment did not save from the small form of ambition. Whatever her motives were — filial obedience, worldly wisdom, or the wish to enter aristocratic society — her decision was a fatal one; for, by binding her to duties she had not always the heroism and self-denial to fulfil, this unhappy union marred the best and fairest portion of her life.

Mademoiselle Necker was known to the friends whom her mother gathered around her, and this was no inconsiderable portion of the French literary world; but Madame de Staël moved in a wider circle, where her appearance was marked by some terrible mistakes. Already, at the age of seventeen, she had startled the old Maréchale de Mouchy, one of the greatest ladies of the *ancien régime*, by asking her what she thought of love. But though this was bad enough, her presentation to Marie Antoinette was infinitely worse. Her curtsey to the queen was all wrong; one of the trimmings of her dress got loose; and when she called on Madame de Polignac, she forgot her cap in the carriage. This was an ominous beginning in a country where ridicule has always been strong, and was then all-powerful. But Madame de Staël laughed at her mistakes, got over them, and soon became something more than a mere court-lady.

Her literary and political career now began. She wrote and published her letters on the writings and the character of J. J. Rousseau. They were intended for private circulation, but soon made their way to the general public. The delicacy of analysis and power of reasoning displayed in this essay were very remarkable in an author who had scarcely passed her twentieth year. Power, indeed, is always Madame de Staël's attribute. She is often wrong, but she is never weak; and she rarely fails to be original. It has been said that her ideas were not all her own — that she gathered them in conversation, and put them down in print. In the first place, there is nothing to prove that such was the case; in the second, if Madame de Staël owed her ideas to her friends, Marmontel, Thomas, Grimm, Raynal, &c., these gentlemen must have thought more and better in conversation than they thought in writing — a remark that has never been applied to them; for they were all laborious and painstaking authors. In no case can the merit of style be denied to Madame de Staël. Nature had given her that wonderful gift which is to thought what light is to nature. She did not cultivate it. She cannot be considered a careful and correct writer; she wrote rapidly, and wrote too much as she talked; but her very words seemed clothed with vigour and pregnant with images. A happy instinct taught her how to treat eloquently the most arid themes, and to give all the charm of original thought to a close and critical examination of the works of others.

The "Letters on Rousseau" appeared shortly before the outbreak of the French Revolution — an event destined to exercise paramount influence on the life, opinions, and literary career of Madame de Staël.

CHAPTER XXII.

Madame de Staël.

A WOMAN like Madame de Staël, so ardent and so enthusiastic, the daughter of a minister, and an ambassador's wife, could scarcely fail to take an active part in this the most remarkable, and, alas! the most tragic event of modern times.

Necker's first ministry extended from 1776 to 1781, when court intrigues made him resign. His daughter was only fifteen; she was twenty-two, and Baroness de Staël, when he was recalled to power in 1788 — and it was she who had the happy mission of giving him the first news of his appointment.

She was joyous and full of hope; France was in all the fervour of her liberal aspirations — a new era of glory, of honour, and liberty seemed opening before her people. Madame de Staël was too proud of her father, she believed too sincerely in his genius, not to see in his advent the herald of a glorious time. Necker's popularity was great, but it did not deceive him. When he received the news at Saint Ouen, he sighed to leave that retreat, for he felt his time was past. Do what good he might, events would go faster than his will, and would be stronger than his power to restrain. "It is too late," he said; and as his daughter still rejoiced, he added, "A minister's daughter has only pleasures — she enjoys the reflection of her father's power, but that power itself is a terrible responsibility, now especially."

The States-General opened in Versailles on the 5th of May, 1789. On the eve of that eventful day, Madame de Staël, and Madame de Montmorin, wife of the minister for foreign affairs, were looking out from the same window when the twelve hundred deputies passed below on their way to the church to hear mass. The three states — the clergy, the nobles, the commons — went by. Madame de Staël, the

daughter of the liberal minister, and herself ardent in what then seemed liberty, could not conceal her joy and her hopes as she looked at the representatives of France. But Madame de Montmorin, a quiet, commonplace woman, said to her in an emphatic tone which impressed Madame de Staël, "You are wrong to rejoice. Great disasters to France and to us will come out of this."

Never, so far as concerned the speaker, was speech more prophetic. Madame de Montmorin, and one of her sons, died on the scaffold; her other son was drowned; her husband was massacred in the fatal days of September; her eldest daughter died in prison, and the younger, Madame de Beaumont, survived only to die of grief.

The ill-judged and never opportune resistance of Louis XVI. to the spirit of the times hastened events. Troops were gathered around Paris, and early in July Necker was dismissed and exiled; but the troops would not fire on the people, and on the 14th of July, three days after Necker's departure, the Parisians took the Bastille, that first and memorable step in what now became the Revolution. Even though he banished him from France, the King gave his minister a marked proof of esteem. He ordered him to leave the country at once, and with the greatest secrecy. Necker obeyed scrupulously. When the King's letter came, he and his wife were at dinner, surrounded by numerous guests. No change of countenance betrayed their secret. As soon as they were alone, they entered their carriage, as if to take a drive, and travelled post-haste to Brussels. Necker left a letter for his daughter, in which he bade her go to the country, lest her presence in Paris should be taken advantage of by the malcontents. She obeyed: not without a sort of regret; deputations from all the quarters of Paris were pouring into her house, and there was a fever of excitement in the very air, which a young and ardent woman like Madame de Staël could hardly resist. Two days after Necker's departure, M. and Madame de Staël followed him. They found him and his wife in an inn at Brussels, still wearing the full dinner-dress, now covered with dust, in which they had left France; for they had obeyed the King's orders so strictly as not even to bring away a change of attire. On thus seeing her father, calm as in his prosperity, Madame de Staël knelt at his feet in a transport of admiration and love.

Necker and M. de Staël went on to Bâle; the two ladies followed them slowly, and were overtaken at Frankfort by the courier who recalled Necker to power. He had learned at Bâle the revolutionary triumph, from the lips of Madame de Polignac, compelled to fly before it; and when his wife and daughter added to these tidings the news of his recall, he did not conceal from them apprehensions, which his wife shared so far that she wished him to decline this perilous honour, but which his more hopeful daughter heard, and could not think founded. Conscious that he must now sacrifice his popularity to serve a falling cause, Necker returned to Paris. Never did triumph more splendid await a popular minister. From Bâle to Paris he met with one long ovation. Women knelt on the road as he passed, men unyoked his horses, and drew his carriage. With him seemed to return that liberty whose reign was to be so tragic. On reaching Paris, Necker at once proceeded to the Hôtel de Ville, to ask for an amnesty of the conquered party; an impassioned and enthusiastic crowd heard him with transport. When he stood on the balcony and spoke — the hero of that crowd's worship — Madame de Staël, overpowered by her feelings, fainted with joy. "When I returned to consciousness," she wrote, many years later, "I felt I had reached the limits of all possible happiness."

But though she conceived no rapture beyond this, she little thought her happiness would be so brief. Mirabeau had risen, a splendid but turbulent genius — the very genius of wrath and storm; who cared not whither he led France, so her ruins might be the pedestal of power and fame.

Little more than a year later, on the 8th of September, 1790, Necker resigned. His popularity was gone for ever — it was so far gone that the people would not let him leave the kingdom. On suspicion of having betrayed the popular cause, he was arrested at Arcis-sur-Aube; his life was even threatened, and an order of the Assemblée Constituante was required to set him at liberty. He retired to Coppet, in Switzerland, and there his daughter soon followed him. In the private life she has written of her father, she paints in a very touching light his resignation, and those beautiful domestic virtues which made him be adored in his own home.

Hitherto, Madame de Staël's political influence had been as a reflex of her father's power. Now, her eloquence, her opinions, her connexion with eminent political men, gave her

a power of her own, which can be rather divined than related; for it was occult, and connected with circumstances of her life which she has voluntarily kept in the shade.

Madame de Staël was what was then called a constitutionalist. She had an ardent love of freedom, and thought the oligarchal constitution of England the most perfect form of government. She forgot two very important facts, which others after her have forgotten — that forms of government are good or evil according as they suit a nation; and that the English constitution rested on the power of a strong aristocracy, which was wanting in France. There it had long been crushed by absolute power, and it could not be restored by any magic or sleight-of-hand. The power of a class must be an inheritance or a conquest. It can be taken — it cannot be bestowed. The aristocracy of France were chivalrous and brave, but they were too weak to take the rule which had so long been surrendered to the king; and the people felt themselves too strong to give up that power which, though new, they already found so sweet.

But our personal feelings often influence our opinions, even unconsciously. Disciple of Rousseau though she thought herself, Madame de Staël was as aristocratic as her plebeian birth would let her be. She loved freedom, but historic names had a *prestige* over her which she never denied. A form of government that recognised illustrious descent, and yet was ready to welcome genius, worth, and wealth; that gave freedom to all, but vigorously kept power within the hands of a few; that secured intellectual, religious, and individual liberty — seemed to her the *beau-ideal* of human wisdom. No doubt it might seem so in France, rising from beneath the intolerable weight of absolute power. Few saw, or would see, that oppression can take many forms, and be social as well as political; that it is possible to be freeborn, and to suffer like the slave. But, apart from such considerations, which the instinct of the nation felt without knowing why or how, the thing is certain, that the English Constitution has not been found applicable in France — and that, to her dying day, Madame de Staël thought differently.

The constitution elaborated by the Constituante was short-lived; but it lasted long enough to water ambitious hopes in one of Madame de Staël's friends, the young Count of Narbonne. He was handsome, brave, and witty. The name he

bore was ancient and honoured; but his origin, though unacknowledged, was known to be illustrious, if rank can efface sin. His father was attached to the person of the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Louis XV., and followed her to Parma on her marriage. M. de Narbonne is said to have been their son. Another of the princesses is thought to have been his mother, and his striking likeness to the old French king strengthened either rumour. Madame de Narbonne helped to conceal the shame of her rival, and brought up the child as her own. He was handsome, amiable, and accomplished, as a man, and universally beloved.

Was it merely friendship, or — as her enemies said — was it love, which bound Madame de Staël to this descendant of the French kings, now wedded to the cause of the people? It is hard to say. A great name, the charm of genius, and, above all, of a most generous heart, have made the world indulgent for Madame de Staël. Few have been found to dare to repeat what was said of her when she lived, and what none have proved. But whatever were her feelings for M. de Narbonne, the openness with which she manifested them injured her reputation at a time when the absence of her husband and of her parents made slander easy.

Europe was threatening France, and the moderates ardently wished for a war, which they conceived would weaken the democratic party, and strengthen the executive power. To that party Madame de Staël belonged, and her influence helped M. de Narbonne to become Minister of War at the close of 1791. His power lasted a few months only, and served but to show him more clearly the inevitable catastrophe towards which all things were tending. It was then that M. de Narbonne and his friends, though little in the favour of the Court — Madame de Staël's house was called "le camp de la révolution" — conceived the romantic project of carrying off the king, whose safety was already doubtful. The king refused. Perhaps the plan was impracticable; perhaps he remembered the fatal flight to Varennes, and its humiliating return. He stayed to meet his fate with that resigned courage that seemed to mark him out for a victim.

Thus ended Madame de Staël's power in this phase of the French Revolution. Henceforth her eloquence and courage were needed and used to save the lives of dear friends. The 10th of August, 1792, dethroned Louis XVI., and founded that

Republic of which Vergniaud said that it was like Saturn, for it devoured its own children. Men who were liberals the day before now became proscribed aristocrats. M. de Narbonne and another found an asylum in Madame de Staël's house; but she could not hide them so well that a search would not betray their presence; and to be seen was to die. A search was ordered and attempted. Madame de Staël opposed it with a mixture of good-humour, flattery, and argument which the *commissaire* could not well resist. Her hôtel, being an ambassador's, could not, she warned him, be searched without violating the rights of nations, and thus bringing down on France the wrath of Sweden; and as Sweden, she added, was on the frontiers of France, the consequences might be dreadful. This new geography frightened the *commissaire*. He retired respectfully, and a generous Dutchman, Doctor Bollman, who later risked his safety to deliver La Fayette, offered Madame de Staël to give M. de Narbonne the passport of a friend, and take him to England. The offer was gladly accepted, and a few days later M. de Narbonne was safe in London.

Madame de Staël had a passport for herself and her servants, but could not bear to leave whilst so many of her friends were exposed to perish. On the 31st of August she learned that M. de Jaucourt and M. de Lally-Tollendal, a descendant of an old Irish family, but by birth a Frenchman, and one of the most eloquent men of the day, had been arrested, and sent to the Abbaye. Every one knew, or seemed to know, the fate that was to befall prisoners. Condorcet and the English ambassador, Lord Sutherland, saved Lally; Madame de Staël was Jaucourt's friend. The members of the Commune de Paris were masters of the city. Madame de Staël knew none of them, but Manuel had a literary turn, of which she took advantage. She wrote to request an audience; he answered by giving her a meeting at seven the next morning. Democratic though she found the hour, she was punctual. She pleaded hard for the order that was to set Lally and M. de Jaucourt free, and Manuel could not resist her eloquent entreaties. Lally was already out of prison, but at her request he procured M. de Jaucourt's freedom. This was on the 1st of September. Twenty-four hours later the massacres began.

On that terrible day, the 2nd of September, Madame de Staël was to leave Paris. Outside the city she was to find

another fugitive, the Abbé de Montesquieu, who was to travel with her, disguised as her servant.

Madame de Staël's generous anxiety to keep an appointment so important to the Abbé, for want of punctuality might ruin him, nearly proved fatal to herself. Scarcely had her carriage left the Hôtel de Suède, when a herd of furious old women assailed it with menaces and cries; ferocious-looking men came to their aid; Madame de Staël had barely time to whisper a message for the Abbé Montesquieu to one of her servants, when she was taken to the section of the quarter, there accused of favouring the escape of the proscribed royalists, and ordered to go to the Hôtel de Ville. So dense was already the crowd — and what a crowd! — that Madame de Staël's carriage took three hours to proceed from the Faubourg Saint Germain to the Hôtel de Ville. Cruel faces, looks that seemed to thirst for blood, and sinister threats of death and vengeance, escorted her the whole way. The very gendarmes answered her entreaties for protection with menacing or scornful gestures. One alone, moved by her youth and her position — she was far advanced in pregnancy — promised to protect her at the peril of his life.

The Hôtel de Ville was reached, and Madame de Staël, leaving her carriage, ascended the steps, on which, not a month before, several men had been massacred. She passed through a wall of pikes and lances threateningly bent over her head. As she was going up the steps a man directed his lance towards her. The faithful gendarme's sword warded the blow. Madame de Staël says, and with truth, that if she had fallen then she must have perished. There is little doubt that men and women who did not even know her name, but who saw in her one of the hated class, would have torn her to pieces. And little more than three years before, and in this very place, the daughter of Necker had fainted with joy to hear the rapturous enthusiasm of the crowd welcoming her father's return to power.

She breathed freely on entering the Hôtel de Ville, where she found Robespierre and several others. The arrival of Manuel procured her a room, in which she was locked up with her maid, and where they waited six hours — "dying of hunger, thirst, and fear," she frankly declares. Their window looked on the Place de Grève, and they could see the murderers coming back from the prisons with arms bare and

blood-stained, and they could hear the furious cries of these savage men who summed up in a few days the wrath and revenge of ages.

Thanks to Manuel, Madame de Staël was released. "Ah!" he cried, much moved, "how happy I am to have set your two friends free!" Alas! six months later, Manuel himself perished on a scaffold, for having humanely refused to vote the King's death. To prevent Madame de Staël from assisting anyone to escape, she was not allowed to travel with any servant but her maid, and a gendarme escorted her to the Swiss frontier of France.

During the terrible reign of terror Madame de Staël wrote little; an eloquent but unavailing pamphlet, in favour of the unfortunate Queen, appeared without her name, but was generally known to be hers. Her father had already, in October, 1792, requested to be counsel for Louis XVI., a perilous office, which was committed to M. de Malesherbes, and which he expiated on the scaffold. By this offer M. Necker forfeited two thirds of his property in France.

Madame de Staël was in England when the great tragedy took place. We find her at the head of the little French emigrant colony of Juniper Hall, Surrey, so agreeably described by Miss Burney and her friends. Delicate ladies, who had crossed the channel in an open boat, and been fourteen hours at sea; Counts, who were glad to borrow their tailor's coat, and who with characteristic openness acknowledged it, and laughed at their own misfortunes. Ex-Dukes, ex-Bishops, ex-Ministers, Montmorencys, Talleyrands, Lally-Tollendals, the flower of the old aristocracy in birth, wealth, and merit, now gathered in that English refuge, short of supplies and very short of hope, but easy, dignified, and free, and, above all, good-humoured. Even the damp kitchen and parlour cottage to which some were reduced had not the power to repress the buoyancy of the national temperament.

The queen, and the generous queen, of this little world was Madame de Staël. Two of the men whose lives she had risked her own life to save were with her, and gladdened her heart with their presence. Her friends, M. de Narbonne, Talleyrand, Madame de Beaumont — the only survivor of the minister Montmorin's family — and *their* friends, shared her home. A M. d'Arblay — whose wife Miss Burney was destined to become — who had been adjutant to La Fayette.

and shared his prison, was there as Narbonne's friend, and transcribed Madame de Staël's last and very illegibly-written work on the Passions; Lally-Tollendal read aloud his tragedy of "Strafford;" and Talleyrand listened and smiled, put in a word and a criticism now and then; told Madame de Staël, who read some fragments of her work, that she did not know how to read prose; was pronounced a man of "admirable conversation, quick, terse, *fin*, and yet deep to the extreme of these four words," by the penetrating Miss Burney, and yet disliked, spite his infinite wit, till, without effort, by the charm of that softness so peculiarly his, he won over not merely that discerning judge, but every one around him. She was amazed at finding her first impression so quickly removed, and could not help writing to her father: "It is inconceivable what a convert M. de Talleyrand has made of me. Susannah is as completely a proselyte."

But deeper, stronger, and more genuine was the impression produced by Madame de Staël. "She is one of the first women I have ever met with for abilities and extraordinary intellect," wrote Miss Burney, to the Doctor, in Chelsea. Little notes — in which Madame de Staël called Miss Burney the first woman in England — were followed by an invitation to spend some time at Juniper Hall, which, though accepted, Doctor Burney did not allow his daughter to comply with. Unpleasant rumours concerning Madame de Staël's political principles, and her connexion with M. de Narbonne, were already rife in England. Miss Burney was annoyed with the report, though she disbelieved it. "She loves him tenderly," she wrote back to her father, "but so openly, so simply, so unaffectedly, and with such utter freedom from all coquetry, that, if they were two men or two women, the affection could not, I think, be more obviously undesigning. She is very plain; he is very handsome. Her intellectual endowments must be, with him, her sole attraction."

A coolness followed, however, the intercourse slackened, and Madame de Staël was not unconscious that she had been slighted. Somewhat sharply, she asked Mrs. Phillips if women were always under control in England. She probably thought Miss Burney — her elder by some years — capable of visiting at Juniper Hall without reference to paternal authority. In a letter which she addressed to the author of "Cecilia," on her estrangement, she justified herself calmly enough,

and quietly referred her feelings for M. de Narbonne to friendship. But the intercourse was broken, not to be renewed with anything like the old cordiality. Miss Burney's reluctance to believe evil of Madame de Staël gradually yielded to public opinion. Mrs. Phillips, her sister, and Madame de Staël's neighbour, seems to have cared less for the world's decrees on this matter. Her partiality is often and clearly expressed; not without some occasional censure, but with evident sincerity. "Madame de Staël is, with all her wildness and blemishes, a delightful companion; and M. de Narbonne rises upon me in esteem and affection every time I see him. Their minds, in some points, ought to be exchanged; for he is as delicate as a really feminine woman, and evidently suffers when he sees her setting *les bienséances* aside, as it often enough befalls her to do. I must go back to Monday, to tell you something that passed which struck and affected me very much. M. de Talleyrand arrived at Juniper to dinner, and Madame de Staël, in a state of the most vehement impatience for news, would scarce give him time to breathe between her questions; and when she had heard all he could tell her, she was equally impetuous to hear all his conjectures. She was evidently elated with hopes of such success as would give peace, security, and happiness to them all, yet scarce dared give way to all her flattering expectations. M. de Talleyrand's hopes were alive, likewise, though he did not, like her, lose his composure and comic placidity of manner."

But all the hopes and conjectures of the little colony were soon at an end. Madame de Staël was summoned to Holland by her husband, and, with many tears, she obeyed the call. M. de Narbonne remained behind, with M. d'Arblay, who married Miss Burney, and did nothing to renew her intimacy with his former friend.

From Holland, Madame de Staël probably proceeded to Switzerland, where her mother died in 1794.

To the last Madame Necker was the most tenderly loved of wives; and when we read how Necker stood still for hours because she had chanced to fall asleep with her head on his shoulder — she was a victim to sleeplessness — and yet how, after her death, he was tormented with scruples as to whether he had or not loved her enough — we can understand the passionate love a daughter like Madame de Staël felt for a

man whose heart was so tender, and whose mind was so delicate.

Her own generous heart found sufficient opportunities for doing good in the vicinity of Switzerland to France. Refugees crossed the frontier, found an asylum at Coppet, and were there sheltered under Swedish names, that the magistrates of the Confederation might not be compelled to give them up. "We thought ourselves justified in deceiving tyranny," she frankly says. Once the passport used by one of those fugitives was Swiss. Its authenticity was suspected. Young M. de Chayla was arrested on the frontier, and his uncle, that M. de Jaucourt whose life Madame de Staël had saved a year before, and who was now at her house under a Swedish name, was in the greatest grief. Unless M. Reverdil, Lieutenant Baillival, claimed M. de Chayla as a native of Vaud, the young man must be shot within twenty-four hours. M. Reverdil at first refused to commit what he called, and what was, an act of forgery. He also objected that, should the truth be discovered, Switzerland would no longer be able to protect her own subjects. But Madame de Staël's moral code was in her heart. She spent two hours in pleading the cause of humanity against that still more sacred of conscience; and at length M. Reverdil yielded, and M. de Chayla was saved. All Madame de Staël's faults and virtues are exemplified in this passage of her life. Her warm heart would know no obstacle to its wishes, and her pliable principles made her believe right what generosity made her desire. Twenty-three years after this event she still thought the course she had pursued the right one.

Madame de Staël's account of this incident is the only one we have; but if we wish to know how truly generous she could be, we need only refer to a letter of Benjamin Constant's, written in 1794, and addressed to Madame de Charrière. Speaking of the lively interest Madame de Staël took in those whom she had once known, he adds: —

"She has just succeeded, after three useless and expensive attempts, in saving from prison, and in assisting to leave France, a woman, her enemy whilst she was in Paris, and who had made it her task to prove her hatred in every manner. This is more than talking."

It is indeed, and it is not merely the opinion of an admirer, who was soon to become a lover — it is that of Joseph de

Maistre, the dogmatic Christian, the unflinching enemy of the eighteenth century, and of the French Revolution.

They met about this time at Lausanne, and had some desperate encounters — though, with great good-humour on either side, they never quarrelled.

"I know no head so thoroughly perverted as is hers," he wrote to a friend; "it is the infallible result of modern philosophy on any woman. But her heart is not at all spoiled; she is wrongly judged in this. As to wit, she has a prodigious deal of it, especially when she does not try to have any. As we have not studied together, we have scenes that are fit to make one die of laughter — but we never quarrel."

In 1795 Madame de Staël returned to France with her husband, who was once more ambassador. Her remarkable work, "*De l'Influence des Passions sur le Bonheur*," commanded attention, and excited criticism. It had been written whilst she was still fresh from those sad and bitter feelings which the Reign of Terror was calculated to awaken in one whose friends were its victims, and who loved freedom. The summer calmness of Lake Lemman, the June splendour of earth and sky, the sublime and lofty peace of that divine nature, contrasting as they did with the despair of man, "that prince of the earth," as she calls him, and for whom earth had no garb of mourning, filled her with discouragement and grief. The love of honourable fame had not saved her father from reverses, patiently borne, but bitterly felt. Love, friendship even, had, she found, their sting. When youth is sceptical it stops at no limits; and, in one sweeping sentence, Madame de Staël condemned passions, and even pure but passionate feelings, as fatal to man's happiness. She saw no remedy in religion — for faith, she declares, is as independent of the will as genius, or any natural gift — and to study goodness and philosophy she limits the consolation of impassioned hearts. The cold and the wise she did not write for; yet we think that the cold and the wise alone could apply lessons so stern. Impassioned hearts know but one cure — change of feeling.

The religious part of the work, an admiration for suicide — which led Madame de Staël so far as to call it a sublime act — and the bitterness of her conclusions, were such as to waken severe criticism; but the admirable analysis of the passions, the delicacy with which she traced their workings, the acute

and charming thoughts which seemed to escape from her, so spontaneous did they appear, could not but extend Madame de Staël's fame. She enjoyed her celebrity as she enjoyed everything; society was as dear to her as if she had not ardent friendships; yet few women had more, and did more to keep those she had.

It was some time before this, in the noon of life and fame, that she renewed that acquaintance with Benjamin Constant, which exercised in many respects so sad an influence on her life.

In a letter to Madame de Charrière, dated Lausanne, October, 1794, Benjamin Constant thus describes the powerful impression Madame de Staël's eloquent goodness had produced upon him:—

"I cannot be as yielding to you about Madame de Staël as concerning M. de la Roche. I cannot find it difficult, as you say, to throw her some praise. On the contrary, since I know her better, I find it very hard not to be always praising her, and not to display the interest and admiration I feel to all with whom I speak. I have rarely seen such a union of astonishing and seductive qualities, so much that is dazzling and solid, a goodness so expansive and so cultivated; so much generosity, a politeness so amiable and so sustained in society; so much charm, simplicity, and abandon in private. She is the second woman I have found, who could be instead of the whole world to me; you know who the first was. Madame de Staël is infinitely more witty in private than in society. She knows how to listen, which neither you nor I thought; she feels the wit of others with as much pleasure as her own, she is ingenious and attentive in setting off those she loves, which shows both goodness and tact. In short, she is a being apart, a superior creature, who may be found once in a century, and such that they who approach her, know her, and are her friends, must not ask for other happiness."

The dawn of love is in this praise, which, though she only claimed friendship, Madame de Charrière resented as treason to herself. A jealousy, which not all Madame de Staël's delicate flattery and politeness could eradicate, showed how much she feared this rival. When the love between Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël began, and how long it lasted, is more than anyone can tell, for friendship preceded its birth and outlived its close. It was always stronger on his side than

on hers; and when she became a widow, and he wished to marry her, she refused. He threatened to commit suicide, as he afterwards threatened when her friend the beautiful Madame Récamier, unwillingly ruled his feverish and wayward heart; but her objections, probably founded on too close a knowledge of his unhappy, irritable, and vacillating temper, were not removed, and Benjamin Constant lived and forgot her. But the charm under which he was when he wrote to Madame de Charrière was never thoroughly broken, and influenced in no small degree his political and literary career.

Madame de Staël was rich, and her husband was prodigal. She had two sons and a daughter, and thought herself bound to leave him, and separate her fortune and theirs from his. Since her mother's death she spent her summers at Coppet with her father; she returned to Paris in winter; even for his sake she could not relinquish society, and even for her sake he would not leave the grave of her mother, buried, according to her wish, in the grounds that surrounded their dwelling. An intimate friend of both father and daughter, who spent a good deal of time with them in Coppet, has left us a graphic account of their mode of life. The family took breakfast in Madame de Staël's room; coffee alone appeared on the table, but the meal lasted two hours; for avoiding politics, though she loved them so dearly, she was in the habit of saying that with them one had religious morals and poetry all in one.

Madame de Staël started some literary or philosophic topic, in which, says M. de Châteaueux, she displayed all "that the human mind can conceive or create of imagination and depth." None could rival her in these controversies, not even her father, though he was no mean antagonist; yet when the victory was all but her own, she voluntarily committed some mistake that yielded it up to him. To him alone did she ever make such a concession.

After this literary breakfast, the guests separated, and did not meet again till dinner, "which was spent in a permanent quarrel between M. Necker and his old, deaf, and grumbling men-servants, relics of that *régime* which M. Necker had buried, and who had followed his fortunes to Coppet in their embroidered coats."

At seven, M. Necker had his whist, which was another long quarrel between himself and his daughter. They left it off

vowing never to play again, and forgot all about it the next day. The rest of the evening was devoted to conversation.

Madame de Staël's part in the politics of her day was too influential on her own destiny to be omitted in any account of her, and too complex and occult to be easily explained without devoting more space to it than a literary notice is entitled to. She has thrown little light on the subject herself, and only occasionally makes admissions which, though slight and unsatisfactory, imply not merely power, but the habit of power. Her political career, such as it was, had three phases: she was powerful during the ministry of M. de Narbonne, who was said to be her lover, and in whose elevation she had assisted, under Louis XVI. Under the Directory she also had considerable influence; one of the members, Barras, though a regicide, was her friend. She acknowledges that she did her best to prevent the crisis of the 18th of Fructidor (4th Sept., 1797) by helping Talleyrand — who already owed her his recall from exile — to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The other members Madame de Staël considers her enemies, and she taxes them with having given orders to have her arrested on the Swiss frontier, and imprisoned in Paris, on account of her persevering efforts in favour of *émigrés*; Barras, however, defended her, saved her from that persecution, and obtained for her permission to return to Paris unmolested.

That she should have been persecuted in times comparatively calm, shows that she possessed, not the shadow of power, but a reality to be dreaded even by a government. Already Legendre, the butcher, and one of the Parisian Deputies, had denounced her and her *salon doré* in the Convention.

The 18th of Fructidor was followed by persecutions which moved Madame de Staël's pity. She was accused of carrying that dangerous virtue too far, and she left Paris for a time; for, as she says herself, "Pity is called treason in times of political crises."

Yet that generous zeal, which never forsook her, again made her save a man's life on her return to Paris. M. Norvins de Montbreton asked her to interfere on behalf of his brother: a military commission was sitting to judge the prisoner, and the sentence was expected to be death. Bernadotte had been refused the life of his friend, Colonel d'Ambert: Madame de Staël did not know to whom to apply, till she remembered that

General Lemoine, who then commanded the Paris division, liked her conversation.

She called on him, accompanied by M. de Norvins. It was very early, for time was precious. General Lemoine was profuse in tedious apologies concerning his apartment and his toilette, but refused to interfere in the matter. All Madame de Staël asked of him was to sign an order for suspending the trial; but the fear of committing himself made him refuse. She renewed her entreaties, fearing alike to say too little or too much. She looked alternately at the clock and at the General, to see which of the two — time or the man — sped more quickly to the goal she dreaded, or to that she wished for. Twice the General took up the pen to sign, and twice he put it down. If we want to know the arguments Madame de Staël used, we can turn to a page of "*Delphine*." The General's child was ill. "If you do not save this man's life," she cried, "your child will die!" The heart is superstitious — the prophecy of woe moved the father. The eloquence which few could resist prevailed once more — the order was signed.

It was towards this time that the third phase of Madame de Staël's political destiny, and the most fatal to her — her long enmity to Napoleon — began.

In 1797, during one of her visits to Paris, Madame de Staël first saw the man who was to exercise such power over her life, and who already filled Europe with his name. His appearance, his manners — though he meant these to be gracious, and spoke kindly of her father — turned her admiration into something that was not fear or awe, but that partook of both. Marvellous intellectual power, deep irony, and a cold will that cut like steel through obstacles, were the characteristics with which she was struck. They spoke on politics, and did not agree. Then General Bonaparte changed the discourse — spoke of the country, the fine arts, and of his love for retirement. Reserved though her account of this first interview is, it is easy to perceive that it made them enemies.

The *coup d'état* of the 18th of Brumaire showed how sincerely the young general loved retirement. Madame de Staël, who had been travelling, returned to Paris on the very day this event took place. He heard that she had censured his conduct, and he sent her his brother Joseph, who was her friend, with overtures of peace. The meaning of the message was: What did Madame de Staël want? — the two millions her

father had left in deposit? If so, the Consul declared himself ready to see that she received the money. "The question is not what I want," replied Madame de Staël, "but what I think;" and she went on opposing the new government in that *salon* of hers which was but a permanent social parliament, singularly obnoxious to a man who hated, above all things, the parliamentary form of government.

Benjamin Constant was to make a speech in the Tribunal, and that speech, directed against tyranny, was inspired by Madame de Staël. On the eve of that day her *salon* was full, and Lucien Bonaparte was one of her guests. Benjamin Constant went up to her, and whispered, "Your *salon* is full of people that please you — it will be empty to-morrow, if I speak — reflect!"

She told him to follow the dictates of his conscience. The speech was delivered, and the ten guests whom Madame de Staël was to have at her house on the evening of that day sent in ten letters of excuse. Few things affected Madame de Staël more than to be thus deserted and reminded of a power beyond that intellectual rule she loved so dearly. It was only by publishing her work on literature, in 1800, that she regained lost ground. It was successful; and, as the world loves success of every kind, her *salon* was thronged once more. "Delphine" appeared two years later. It was treated with great severity; in many respects it deserved it. Madame de Staël thought that much of the animosity displayed was owing to the hatred the First Consul bore her. He had already hinted, whilst she was away, as usual, to spend the summer with her father, that she had better not return to Paris. Though she disobeyed, with apparent impunity, this implied command, she felt insecure. Once more she left Paris, and once more she returned to it, when in 1803, braving opinion that had perhaps restrained him till then, the First Consul exiled Madame de Staël. One afternoon as she was sitting, with a few friends, in the parlour of a country house, where she had hoped to remain forgotten, a man in grey rode up to the gate. At once she knew her fate. Politely enough the stranger, who was commandant of the Versailles gendarmerie, informed her that she was to leave Paris, and retire to a distance of forty leagues, within twenty-four hours. She replied that only conscripts could prepare for a journey within twenty-four hours, and not women and children; but she agreed to accompany him to Paris, and to

depart thence. This gendarme had a literary turn, and spoke politely of her works.

"You see, sir, what it leads a woman to, to be a *femme d'esprit*," she replied. "Pray, if such counsel be necessary, advise the ladies of your family against it."

Madame Récamier, who had received her friend at Saint Brice, and who was present when all this occurred, says, in one of the fragments published in her memoirs: "I witnessed her despair; she wrote to Bonaparte, 'What a cruel distinction you confer on me. I shall have a line in your story.'"

Though Joseph Bonaparte interfered in her favour, he could not get the order for this arbitrary exile revoked. It was scarcely safe to plead for Madame de Staël; still less so, to show her too devoted a friendship. Madame Récamier's affection for her was one of the causes which brought down on that beautiful woman the displeasure of the Imperial master. In the fulness of his power Napoleon went so far as to say, "That he should consider as his personal enemy any foreigner who would frequent Madame Récamier's *salon*." Was this mere want of magnanimity, or must we see in this speech an unconscious admission of weakness?

It is honourable to have been so faithfully loved as was Madame de Staël, spite the haughty power whose whole might was bent against her. But she knew how to love well; and none were dearer to her heart than the mild, modest beauty whose attraction was so different from her own. What a contrast between these two women — the dark, plain, eloquent Madame de Staël, and the sweet, silent, angel face of Madame Récamier!

"Dear Juliet," she wrote to her once, "my heart beats with the pleasure of seeing you!" And friendship never verged more on the ground of love than in the often quoted adieu of another letter. "With reverence do I kiss your lovely face."

Being exiled from Paris, Madame de Staël went to Germany, with her children and Benjamin Constant. At Weimar she met Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland, and laid in that store of knowledge which she afterwards turned to such good account.

She was admired, eagerly sought and courted; yet the private letters of some of the illustrious men with whom she became acquainted show that the impression she produced was not altogether a favourable one. The opinions Schiller

and Goethe exchanged in their correspondence concerning the celebrated foreigner, held much more of blame than of admiration. Schiller praised her sound frankness and sincerity, and looked on her as the interesting *fac-simile* of the cultivated French mind; but he set her feeling above her judgment; pitied her metaphysical ignorance; contended that she had no true perception of poetry; and that only the eloquent and impassioned features of fiction were revealed to her. He gave her, however, some of those critical qualities which she displayed in "De l'Allemagne" — decision, sagacity, and great quickness.

"The only unpleasant thing in her," he added, "is her extreme volubility, which compels her listener to become all ear; but the little French I know having enabled me to understand her conversation, you, who are so much more proficient, will enjoy it more easily."

There is impartiality in Schiller's opinion; Goethe's, as expressed in those letters, is rather ill-tempered than clear, or conveying any positive blame.

It was during this German journey, which she enjoyed so much, that Madame de Staël lost her father. A nine day's illness carried him off in April, 1804. News of his danger reached her in Berlin, but she was not told that he had already ceased to live. She travelled home in a fever of anxiety, and learned the truth at Weimar. He had been the great love of her life: his death was certainly its greatest grief. She had never been able to face the thought of losing him. Some one having once told her that M. Necker seemed older, she repelled the suggestion with a sort of anger, and declared that she would consider as her greatest enemy the person who would make such an assertion, and would never see that person again. She who thus unreasonably, though fondly, quarrelled with the natural decay of age, had now to face the bitter, the inexorable reality of death. With her father the stay as well as the happiness of life seemed to depart. Her sorrow took the most childlike forms. Seeing her annoyed and perplexed about trifles, Madame Necker Saussure said to her —

"What matter? Why trouble yourself with this?"

"Ah! it is that I have no longer got my father," was her pitiful reply.

He was the great, the irreparable want of her nature, and to that one loss she referred every trouble, every sorrow. He

was her sensitive point, too; and it is said that, whereas she never resented the evil which was said of herself, she never forgot or forgave that which was said of him.

By that strong love, and love deep as well as strong, we may test Madame de Staël's restlessness. She could never remain long with that adored father. Solitude killed her, and by solitude we must understand the society of her father, her children, and of the friends who, unless in the last bitter years of her exile, were constant visitors in Coppet. She had been reared in a crowd — an intellectual one indeed, but a crowd for all that. She required its variety, its changing aspect, its power, and its contests. Accordingly, Coppet was solitude. Doubly so was it when she returned to it after her father's death; when cares, which he had spared her, fell on her daily, and reminded her that she had lost him for whom alone she had never ceased to be a child. She was his last and, save God, his only thought.

A political work of his had helped to irritate Bonaparte against Madame de Staël. Her father, even when fever was strong, wrote with a trembling hand a letter in which he assured the First Consul that his daughter had no share in that work, that she had even not approved his publishing it. The letter was sent, and did nothing but give Madame de Staël a new proof of his unflinching love; she was too formidable an enemy to be thus forgiven.

And the memory of that love never forsook her. It made her more religious, or, at least, strengthened her wavering faith in the immortality of the soul. It took a peculiar form, too, for one who was not merely born a Protestant, but who never ceased to hold and maintain strictly Protestant feelings, even when she was least a Christian. To her father's prayers in her favour she referred whatever good befell her, and she prayed to him as to a friend nearer than herself to the Source of all mercy. This domestic worship she wished to transmit to her children. Years later she attributed to her father's intercession the happy marriage of her daughter Albertine; and when that daughter was in ill-health, she offered to send her M. Necker's portrait. To look at that friendly and beloved face had soothed her in pain, and what it had done to her she thought it might do to her daughter too.

What Madame de Staël was as a daughter she also was as a mother — fond and devoted. She had two sons and a daughter

by her first marriage. She loved them infinitely, and "was passionately loved by them," said Madame de Broglie. But her love blended with firmness. She gave the law in her family, and exacted implicit obedience. In this, as in other matters, Madame de Staël showed a practical sense, which was the result of judgment, and especially of will.

She was naturally careless of the future. Her father used to say of her that she was like the savages who sell their huts in the morning, and know not where to sleep at night. Yet, after his death, when she had to administer her large fortune, she did so with equal prudence and economy. Her only great luxury was an accomplished cook, who travelled with her. "Why be surprised at the reception Madame de Staël gets in Germany?" said a German lady. "She well may be sure of success, when she comes preceded by her reputation, and followed by her cook."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Madame de Staël.

It was after her father's death that Madame de Staël's shattered health sent her to Italy; and to her sojourn in that beautiful country we owe "*Corinne*." She began it in 1805, on her return. It is not when we see places that we describe them best, or feel their beauty most. Memory has a marvellous power for making our perceptions of the beautiful keener and deeper.

Fouché, then Minister of Police, allowed Madame de Staël to approach Paris within twelve leagues; and going beyond the permission, in her longing for the very stones of her beloved city, she paid it some stolen night-visits, which were discovered, and had to be given up. She was near enough to superintend the publication of "*Corinne*." The success of this wonderful book was great enough to waken the strange jealousy of Napoleon. He is said to have taken up his pen, and criticized it himself in the *Moniteur* — a singular proof of resentment, if true: the imperial ruler of Europe turning critic, and hating a novel.

Madame de Staël had to return to Coppet. Unable to remain quiet, and, since the delight of a *salon* and of poli-

tical and literary conversation was denied her, anxious to seek elsewhere that intellectual excitement which was life for her, she paid another visit to Germany in 1807. Already, in 1804, she had brought home one of the Schlegels with her, though there was little love between him and Benjamin Constant. We get glimpses of this second visit in Bettina Brentano's jealous account of it.

"Madame de Staël will have sufficed him (Goethe)," she wrote. "He will not have remembered that I am. A renowned woman is a curious thing; no other can be compared with her. She is like spirit, with which the grain it is made from also cannot be compared. . . . I would rather be a simple grain of wheat than a celebrated woman, and rather he should break me for his daily bread than post like a dram through his head." The wilful girl and the celebrated woman met at Mayence, and supped side by side. No other woman, Bettina declares, would take this dangerous post. She found it inconvenient. A crowd of men gathered and pressed around Madame de Staël. "Your adorers stifle me!" pettishly said Bettina. When she rose she saw a laurel leaf which Corinne had dropped after playing with it. She trod on it with true Italian jealousy, and pushed it aside. No less significant of the envy Madame de Staël could excite is Bettina's frank, graphic account of the interview between that celebrated lady and Goethe's mother, written for Goethe's benefit. The meeting was a curious one — Goethe's mother in all her state and stiffness, Madame de Staël as perplexed as good breeding could let her be.

"Je suis la mère de Goethe," was Madame Goethe's solemn declaration.

"Ah! j'en suis charmée," was the visitor's reply.

It is hard to believe that Madame de Staël did not do her best to charm the mother of the great man; but that mother's companion nothing could please. She spared Goethe nothing: from the yellow turban, the short waist that cannot have left the heart much room, down to the full red lips; and the petulant conclusion — "How canst thou be amiable, with such an unpleasant face to look at?" she wrote, as one resolved to quarrel with the great authoress, whom she suspected her idol of admiring.

Bettina was jealous, but it is indeed true that Madame de Staël's first appearance was not pleasing; it is also true that

she had the gift to destroy that first impression. She was about forty-two when young Bettina saw her; and later still, to the close of her life, she had the power to please and to charm. She was not young when Mademoiselle Cochelet, reader to Queen Hortense, met her. Like everyone, she was struck with her swarthy complexion and strongly-marked features; she could not understand that a woman so plain could ever have inspired a passion. But Madame de Staël spoke to the queen. Delicately and feelingly she reminded her that, had it been in her power, she, Madame de Staël, would not have been so long an exile; her countenance expressed nothing but softness and feeling, and Mademoiselle Cochelet found her beautiful, and acknowledged that she could be loved.

Madame de Staël spent a calm year in Vienna; then devoted two years in Switzerland to writing her great work, "De l'Allemagne." It was then that she and her friends amused themselves with those dramatic representations which made Coppet so celebrated and attractive. Madame de Staël had a beautiful voice, and was an excellent actress. Her fine figure and lovely arms made her appear to advantage in the classic costume of the old tragedies. She acted with a passion and a vehemence that would never let her take off, without breaking it, the cross she wore in the part of Zaire; but though her range wanted variety, though the inspired Corinne was too apparent, the effect she produced was marvellous. She moved to tears, and had the gift of also moving to laughter. She wrote some slight comedies, and excelled in the parts of soubrettes, says M. de Châteaueux. Acting, indeed, became a passion; and, in his history of his own times, M. Guizot has given us a very characteristic instance of the extent to which this mere amusement absorbed Madame de Staël.

M. Guizot — then a young man — was travelling through Switzerland; he was introduced to Madame de Staël, and sat next her at dinner. He spoke of an article by Châteaubriand in the *Mercure*, and which had produced a sensation at the time of his departure from Paris. He quoted a sentence, word for word. Struck with the tone with which he had uttered the names of Nero and Tacitus, Madame de Staël seized the arm of the young stranger, and said, eagerly: "I am sure you would act tragic parts very well. Stay with

us, and appear in 'Andromaque.'" The future minister of Louis Philippe declined the flattering proposal, and 'Andromaque,' which could balance for a while her detestation of Napoleon in Madame de Staël's mind, had to do without him.

If Madame de Staël had not been tormented by her passion for Paris, how gay, happy, and enviable might seem her life in Coppet. Rich, hospitable, admired and loved by all who knew her — living in the daily converse of the finest minds — cultivating her own marvellous powers in the happy liberty which freedom from sordid cares alone can give — she moved like an intellectual sovereign in her empire. Few who approached her could resist that charm.

"Madame de Staël is a queen," wrote the poet Werner to his friend Schnegger; and he speaks with impassioned ardour of the charm by which she binds men of intellect within her magic circle, uniting the most opposed tempers in one worship. In this strange portrait, occasionally too free, Werner does not forget the two traits that always struck whosoever approached Madame de Staël — the marvellous power of her look, so full of soul; and the nobler power which her great and generous heart put into her ardent language. Werner's "Attila" was acted on the stage of Coppet, and the author may have influenced the man; but more disinterested guests came to conclusions as enthusiastic.

Ehlerschläger, the Danish poet, also talks of Madame de Staël as a queen and an enchantress: he, too, felt the charm of those kind dark eyes, so full of fire and softness — he, too, acknowledged the power with which she compelled minds the most opposed to live at peace within her sphere.

In the summer of 1810, her work being finished, Madame de Staël went to Blois, the limit within which she was allowed to approach Paris. The lovely and faithful Madame Récamier was with her, and a few other devoted friends soon joined her. But even in this quiet provincial town she was tormented by Imperial jealousy. She once went to the play. On leaving the house she was followed by a crowd, curious to see the feminine enemy of Napoleon. The minister of police wrote to the préfet that Madame de Staël kept her court; and the préfet, M. de Corbigny, a courteous and amiable man, repeated the speech to the exile.

"It is not power gives it to me," was her prompt reply.

“*De l’Allemagne*” was the result of six years labour. It was printed, and on the eve of publication. Madame de Staël sent a copy of her work to Napoleon, with a letter which a more generous man could not have read unmoved. It spoke the language of entreaty, but without meanness. With a calm dignity, and a sincerity that neither allowed the writer to humble herself, nor yet to disguise the pain of her exile, she asked that painful exile to be revoked. She asked it not merely because it was a source of personal suffering, but because it threatened all the prospects of her children. But the very loftiness of her tone, with which a magnanimous heart would have been moved, seemed, to one whom flattery had spoiled, insolence worthy of punishment. By order of the minister of police, the ten thousand copies of “*De l’Allemagne*” were seized and destroyed, and Madame de Staël was ordered to leave France within three days. An attempt was made to get her manuscript, but her son succeeded in saving it. She gave the préfet an imperfect copy; and a few days delay being granted her, she reluctantly took her road to Switzerland and returned to Coppet.

She was now persecuted with a shameful meanness against which all her spirit and pride could scarcely bear up. The préfet of Geneva advised her to conciliate the Emperor by writing something about the infant King of Rome. Madame de Staël impatiently replied, “All I can do for him is to wish him a good nurse.”

It was not enough that her sons could not enter France, not even to pursue their studies — Madame de Staël was forbidden to go two leagues beyond Coppet. Her friend Schlegel, who had been with her for the last eight years educating her sons, was not allowed to remain in Geneva, or even in Coppet, as his Germanic presence would un-French Madame de Staël. The said Schlegel, having preferred the *Phædra* of Euripides to that of Racine, was certainly an unpatriotic companion.

The persecution now, indeed, extended from Madame de Staël herself to her friends. Two of the oldest and the most devoted, M. Mathieu de Montmorency and Madame Récamier, were exiled for having visited her at Coppet. To approach her became so perilous, that in the end this generous, large-hearted woman, who had never shrunk from friends in danger, and who found solitude intolerable and wasting, to whom

friendship and society were as the breath of life, found herself well-nigh deserted. Unable to bear this wretched existence any longer, and urged by private reasons, of which the imperial police took the most ungenerous advantage, she resolved to escape from her prison, no matter at what cost.

Madame de Staël's separation from her husband was short, and never unfriendly. When the infirmities of age overtook him; she joined him with their three children, and they were all on their way to Coppet when he died.

She refused to marry Benjamin Constant, but was not proof against the strange passion with which, without seeking it, she inspired M. de Rocca. He was twenty-seven, and remarkably handsome, but almost dying of five wounds received in the Peninsular war. They met in Geneva, in 1811. Madame de Staël was then forty-five, and she had never been handsome; but she saw him, pitied him, and, by that compassion, inspired him with the most violent passion.

"I shall love her so much that she will marry me in the end," he said, confidently.

"She is old enough to be your mother," said a prudent friend.

M. de Rocca's reply is characteristic of a man very much in love: "I am glad you have given me another reason for loving her."

The obstinacy of his passion, and her own pity for his state, prevailed on Madame de Staël to become his wife. But their marriage was kept secret; and hence, when, in the year 1812, she found herself on the eve of giving birth to a child — the only one born of this melancholy union — she would not submit to the humiliation of being compelled to confess her marriage, or, by concealing it, of injuring her reputation. Accordingly flight was resolved on. On the 23rd of May, 1812, Madame de Staël, and her daughter, took their fans, stepped into a carriage, and went out for a drive before dinner. Their drive took them on to Berne, where they met Schlegel in a farmhouse. At Salzbourg they were joined by M. de Rocca, and reached Vienna in June. But Austria was then under the yoke of France; and though so far Madame de Staël's flight had proved successful, she did not venture to wait in Vienna for the Russian passport which was to enable her to continue her journey — that is to say, to reach England, the goal of her wishes — by going round Northern Europe.

Madame de Staël has left a minute account of this journey, of its miseries and fatigues, which helped, indeed, to shorten her life. But even though she always referred her sufferings to their author, she could not exaggerate that terrible power which made a vast prison of Europe. A sense of closeness, of oppression, weighs on us as we follow her in her flight. Instead of that breadth of earth which travels in strange lands, of varied climate and changing speech, always suggest, we feel that the world is hemmed in within a few narrow shores, all guarded by a tyrant's might.

On went the fugitive, and wherever she went she found the jealous Austrian police closely watching the enemy of the man who had humbled Austria. At length Russia was reached — on the 14th of July, the memorable anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, she entered the empire of the Czars. She fled to the land of the serfs from the despotism of the land of liberty. Through the vast Russian plains she went on to Moscow. She travelled fast, yet she seemed to feel the breath of Napoleon's great armies behind her. She saw the Kremlin — which Napoleon was to see too — in tragic events for ever memorable. From the steeple of the cathedral she gazed down on the oriental-looking city. She saw it glittering in the August sun, with its gilded domes, its fifteen thousand churches, and its palaces surrounded by vast gardens. A month later, the splendid scene was a heap of ashes and ruins — a month later, the beautiful villa where, as a guest, she dined with Rostopchin and his wife, was burned down by the hand of its own master.

Madame de Staël was received with great distinction in St. Petersburg. It was there, when she complimented the Emperor Alexander on the good fortune of his subjects in owning such a sovereign, that he made her the happy and well-known reply: "And even were it so, I should be but a fortunate accident."

From Russia Madame de Staël proceeded to Sweden. There she rested for some time, and completed her work "On Suicide," written in 1811, as a sort of atonement for the admiration she had formerly expressed for this criminal act. From Sweden she proceeded to England; and there we find her, in 1813, publishing "De l'Allemagne."

Mrs. Opie has left us some account of Madame de Staël, during this stay of hers in London. She saw at her house Lord

Erskine, the Mackintoshes, the Romillys, the exiled majesty of the King of the Netherlands, and all that London then held offashion and beauty; and by her testimony she has confirmed what we already knew of Madame de Staël's "ever-ready repartees and almost unrivalled eloquence." A humorous incident she has not forgotten. It is best told in her own words:

"She had recently left the court of Bernadotte, and from time to time indulged herself in descanting in his praise. At length, she produced a portrait in miniature of her favourite, painted in profile, and when it had gone round the greater part of the circle she put it into the hand of Sir Henry Englefield, well known as a man of virtue, science, and taste for the fine arts; and while she stood by the side of the chair on which he was indolently lounging, she evidently waited with much anxiety the result of his examination. Carefully and long did he examine the painting, and then holding it up to the light which hung near him, he observed with slow, distinct utterance, and in rather a loud voice, 'He is like a ferocious sheep!' on which, uttering an exclamation of justly indignant surprise, Madame de Staël snatched the miniature from him, and turned hastily away."

Mrs. Inchbald she met, too, though not without some reluctance on that lady's part. Moore, who called her "that *begum* of literature," was not more willing to encounter her, even though Rogers tempted him with Mademoiselle de Staël. "She is very pleasing, and dances a shawl-dance beautifully. The mother, too, you would like: very good-natured — very lively and eloquent."

"Very good-natured" was likewise Byron's encomium, in his diary of 1813. Scott, however, though so keen an appreciator of feminine genius, did not know nor care to know her. We find him writing, December, 1813, to Miss Baillie, whom he had called "the great poet of the age:"

"All Edinburgh have been on tiptoe to see Madame de Staël, but she is not now likely to honour us with a visit, at which I cannot prevail on myself to be very sorry; for, as I tired of some of her works, I am afraid I should disgrace my taste by tiring of the authoress too."

The triumphs of this English visit were saddened to Madame de Staël by the death of one of her sons, killed in a duel.

Napoleon's abdication in 1814 enabled her to return to Paris; when he left the island of Elba she did not await his

return to go once more into exile. He was inclined for peace, however, and sent her word to come back, "for that her presence was required in Paris for constitutional ideas."

Madame de Staël's answer was both sharp and witty; she refused to go, and said:

"He has done without either a constitution or me for the last twelve years, and even now he is not much fonder of one than of the other."

We fear he was not. Yet, if we are to trust the memorial de Sainte Hélène, Napoleon was less bitter towards Madame de Staël in his captivity than she has proved herself towards him in her *Dix Années d'Exil*.

He indulged himself with some personal sneers at her love-sorrows and literary character, but he certainly did not exaggerate the injury she inflicted upon him.

"Coppet," he said, "was an arsenal against me; she either stirred up enemies against me, or combatted me herself; she was both Armida and Clorinda." Alluding to the attempts made in her favour, and to the arguments which her friends and his adduced, that she was an adversary to be feared, and might be a useful ally, he confessed as much himself to Las Casas. "It is certain, that if she had taken to me, instead of running me down as she did, I could have been a gainer; for her position and her talent made her govern coteries, and every one knows their influence in Paris."

"After all," he said another time, "no one can deny that Madame de Staël was a woman of great talent and infinite *esprit*; she will remain."

The long quarrel between them, which cost Madame de Staël so dear, and from which the great soldier himself did not come out quite scathless, he treated with a sort of good-humoured coolness edifying to behold:

"Spite all the harm she has said of me, and without reckoning all that she will say yet, I am very far from holding her as a wicked woman. We simply played at war: that is all."

Terrible play Madame de Staël found it. The disasters of Waterloo carried away the last vestiges of that despotism against which she had striven so long. She hated the tyrant, but the triumph of the foreigner was hateful. With questionable taste Canning said to her one day,

"Well, Madame, we have conquered you."

"Give us the *tête-à-tête* and we shall see," she quickly replied.

Her shattered health and M. de Rocca's delicate lungs took her to Italy; there in February, 1816, she married her daughter Albertine, a beautiful and charming girl, to the Duke of Broglie. She wrote to a friend: "I bless God, and my father, who has obtained for me, from that God worthy of all goodness, a friend for my daughter, so worthy of esteem and affection."

It was no doubt a love-match; for Madame de Staël's ideal — love in marriage — never left her, and she used to say, pleasantly enough, "I shall compel my daughter to marry for love."

Her health, and that of M. de Rocca, sank fast. It was a pitiable sight to see them both when they returned to Paris. She struggled best against disease; he had to be supported and almost carried when they paid visits together. As her illness progressed, Madame de Staël took opium to secure a few hours' sleep. When she woke in the morning her maid gave her writing materials, and she wrote till twelve. A looking-glass was then brought to her, that she who had always had the deepest horror of age and death might see the progress of both on her suffering features. On one of those sad mornings Châteaubriand called upon her. He found her with her spectral-looking husband, who retired silently; she was flushed with fever, but her look had not lost its charm and its beauty.

"Bon jour, my dear Francis," she said, "I suffer, but that does not prevent me from liking you."

The illustrious author of the "*Génie de Christianisme*" is said not to have returned the feeling, though the gentle influence of Madame Récamier made him deal kindly enough with Corinne in his memoirs; but the sympathy and attraction he never could feel for her, she always instinctively felt for him. It was to him she said, not long before her death, "I have always been the same — sad and lively; I have loved God, my father, and liberty."

Great sweetness to all who approached her marked the sufferings of her last illness. At length, on the 17th of July, 1817, at five in the morning, she expired, in the arms of Benjamin Constant, says one account. That he sat up with her in the night is certain — a bitter vigil. Grief hastened M. de

Rocca's approaching end; he died six months after the woman he had so passionately loved.

It is rather hard to say so, but it would appear that, save by her own near friends, Madame de Staël was not much regretted. A letter, by no means a good-natured one, considering that it dealt with an old and tried friend, of General d'Arblay to his wife, shows us how ironical and cold the feelings of a good many were with regard to the once worshipped Corinne.

In Joubert's works we find another letter, tender and penetrating, like everything which fell from that delicate pen, and which shows us more plainly still how weak is the hold of genius on the human heart. It is written a few days after Madame de Staël's death, and addressed to his friend, Madame de Vintimille.

After speaking on various subjects, he alludes to his failing health. "Happily," he adds, "my heart is still living, but it lives entirely for you alone; perhaps, too, for Madame de Staël, whom I have never seen, whom I avoided a thousand times, who seemed to me a fatal and pernicious being, whose death, though I hold it a good, yet saddens me when I see the coldness with which the friends of that woman, so long worshipped, and still so living, have seen her go down to the grave! Everywhere I have sought for regrets — not one true one has been expressed; her very neighbourhood has cursed her, I know not why. Benjamin Constant was two hours with M. Frisell, on the day of her death, and he never mentioned it. When M. Frisell reproached him for this, a few days later, he answered, 'I thought you knew it.' The day of praise has been displaced for her; she received it during life — beyond life there was none. I have been truly grieved at this calamity of so great a fame; and when I saw that no one would think of the poor woman, I set to thinking of her alone, and to regret, with inconsolable bitterness, the bad use she has made of so much mind, of so much strength and goodness. She died, as you know, Madame de la Roche, or de la Rocca; and this, which enlivens my sadness a little, has not made scandal busy. But for the newspapers the close of a life which was so tumultuous would not have made the least noise."

And was it so indeed? Did the enemy of Napoleon, the generous and large-hearted woman, leave so little sorrow behind her that a stranger long unfriendly thought himself

bound to mourn for her with such intellectual, refined mourning as he could feel, and the unseen dead could inspire. It is sad to believe it, and yet we think it was true: save by a devoted few, Madame de Staël was not lamented. Her worshippers were sun-worshippers, who watched her setting, and soon forgot the light on which night had closed. The sad but inevitable destiny of all literary fame!

It is not easy to form a correct opinion of so complex a character as was that of Madame de Staël; private sources of information, which the future may yet unveil, are now closed, through the natural prudence and jealousy of a great family. For instance, there must exist letters of hers. They are said to have been graceful, though careless; she wrote them whilst she talked with her friends — but such as they are, they must throw much light on her feelings and real nature; they are kept back, however, and though, in an age which profanes daily the holy feelings of friendship and trust, such reserve is worthy of all respect, it often renders inquiry perplexed and useless. There are few persons living in recent times, and having left so great a name, who are in reality less known to us than is Madame de Staël. Her errors are authentic enough to leave a stain on her name as a woman, but not to mollify the severity of our judgment. Her late marriage with M. de Rocca is the truest clue we have to this portion of her life; it was a folly, but an honourable one, and it does more to absolve her than all that her friends have said in her favour. The woman who at forty-five could still hope and believe in love in marriage, and endeavour to secure it to herself, may have been an erring, but surely she was not a vicious woman.

But setting apart even this important and delicate feature of Madame de Staël's existence, and which relatives and friends very naturally wished to keep in the shade, it may still be said that we know little of her. Madame Necker Saussure, her adopted sister, she who watched by the death-bed of her beloved father, has written an able and interesting account of her friend, the best there is — but it is a panegyric, it is not a biography. In that account, however, Madame Necker Saussure makes some admissions, two of which, though only casual remarks, are perhaps a fair key to both the good and the evil which there was in this remarkable woman.

“Seen from without, the life of Madame de Staël would not answer the expectations one has a right to conceive from

it — and who can ever enter her being to say what she has felt?"

The latter remark is true of every human life; the best, the purest, the noblest part of it is revealed to the eye of God alone; but we think the first admission, that the outward life of Madame de Staël failed in something essential, is more than sufficient. Sorrow, genius, and fame she had in abundance; she had, too, some of the noblest gifts God can give to a human being — enthusiasm and an ardent and generous heart. What then could be wanting? We think that without wronging Madame de Staël, above all, without perverting the words of a friend from their true meaning, another remark of Madame Necker Saussure's will confirm all we do know, and give us the clue to much that we know not, and need not care to learn. Speaking of the change which years and experience wrought in Madame de Staël's opinions, Madame Necker de Saussure adds:

"Her scruples, which had always had the consequences of her actions for their object, became more and more fixed on their motives."

It is scarcely necessary to point out that a life in which the consequences of actions were weighed in preference to the motives must have been full of deficiencies. The consequences of our actions, good or evil, are in the hands of God; our motives alone are ours, and to have had a leaning towards result, and a certain coldness to principle, is the weak point in Madame de Staël's life. A great and generous heart could save her from much, but even that could not save her from all; hence we think the sense of disappointment any keen searcher must always feel on entering the private existence of one so celebrated. Even at her best it is her impulses much more than her motives that are good. It would be a nice and delicate task to say where impulse ended and motive began with her; how far she drew on the nobility of her nature, and allowed her feelings to sway her judgment. Towards the close of her life she was certainly conscious of error, and she bore against herself that sad testimony which the lives of the wisest and the best can confirm: "I never was wrong but some sorrow came of it."

This preference of impulse to cold duty was her great error, and her great sorrow. It is in all her earliest works, and it made her too easily pleased with their moral teaching.

Satisfied with religious impulse, she did not guard her impassioned heart with strong religious precepts of right or wrong; above all, she kept aloof from motives, which are hard, definite things, bitter to deal with, and she indulged herself with visions of consequences, in which, if there be truth in human life, she must have been mistaken nine times out of ten. It does infinite credit to the nature of Madame de Staël, that, acting on theories so imprudent, she yet remained what she was — a being both good and great. And thus it is, no doubt, that though she had enemies and detractors, she was on the main judged with so much tenderness. Her pious friend, Mathieu de Montmorency, knew her errors, deplored them, and loved her tenderly to the last. There was an ardour in her goodness, which, if it was perilous to her own soul and heart, was irresistibly fascinating; we have heard much of her wonderful eloquence; we hear still more of her kindness, forbearance, and inexhaustible power of forgiving. She was not always true to herself; but who can record that she ever betrayed or forsook a friend, that she meanly resented a wrong, and that in a life so active, and so extensive in its action, she ever voluntarily inflicted the smallest injury on a human being? If the weak point of her life was a want of fixed principle with regard to her own conduct, a generous magnanimity in all that concerned others was its noblest feature. Hence her enemies were obliged to attack her person, her books, or her political principles; there was nothing else for them; not one of those terrible meannesses which so often make us shrink from the lives of the famous and the great. She has been dead forty years and more, and, far from decreasing in esteem, she has risen. A lenient veil has been thrown over her errors; what could not be denied has not been intruded, and all that was so honourable in her career has been more clearly shown and more dearly prized as years have sped on — because its rarity has been more acutely felt. Her singular generosity has done for her own repute what it did for the life of a condemned man whose pardon she solicited on her death-bed, and who was allowed to live on the day that closed her existence. She never knew it; that good deed survived her, and the guilty wretch enjoyed the sweetness of life when she lay cold in her grave. Even so have her virtues outlived her errors, and thrown them so far into the shade, that it is almost an act of daring to call them forth, even at the voice of truth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Delphine."

BESIDES some tales which she published in 1795, Madame de Staël wrote two novels, one of which is world-known. "Delphine" has never enjoyed the popularity of "Corinne." It is more of a novel, and Madame de Staël was not a good novelist. Her mind was too metaphysical for romance. Incidents were nothing with her unless they had a meaning. Her characters were controversial; her subjects were long arguments. She wrote but two novels: woman's love was the hero of the one, and woman's genius of the other.

Châteaubriand said of her that had she not spoken so well she would have written better. We may add, had she not thought so much, her novels would have been more natural and pleasing. There is but one good way of telling a story — it is to relate it in the spirit in which children and the ignorant relate what they wish you to know — in simple good faith, like any old epic.

This plan Madame de Staël's genius, both subtle and deep, could not follow. "Corinne" is a splendid guide-book — "Delphine" is a history of passion, from which all that does not bear upon passion has been excluded. It is said to happen at the time of the French Revolution. It might happen in Fairyland, for all we know of that gloomy crisis, until it is brought in to produce the catastrophe. Love is all that Delphine and Léonce live for. They move in a storm of feeling, that does not always bear away the colder reader. He loses breath in such inaccessible regions, and basely longs for the coolness and repose of the quiet valleys.

This absence of life's tame realities from fiction was part of a system. The same system made the author declare that the dogmas of any religion are opposed to imagination and thought, and therefore exclude them from her pages. Taste must guide in this delicate matter; but to banish dogmatic religion from fiction means that it should be left out from life — for what is fiction but a life more noble, more imaginative than the real? The dogmas of religion must be blended with our whole existence, or they are nothing — nay, we are better without them — and if a tale soar on sublime wing beyond the

belief which guides daily life, it is weak, it has no hold on reality.

To avoid the check of religious dogma on the imagination, Madame de Staël took a sweeping measure: Léonce is an atheist; Delphine a deist; Mathilde, the prudish and tiresome woman, a rigid Catholic. They are all three as different as their individual opinions, and though deficient in reality, the story is based on a very just and striking contrast of character. That contrast, and the moral of the tale, are to be found in the epigraph on the title-page, taken by Madame de Staël from the writings of her mother, Madame Necker: "A man must know how to brave opinion — a woman how to submit to it."

The misfortunes of Léonce and Delphine spring from their disobedience of that axiom. Léonce is the slave of honour, or rather of what the world calls honour. Delphine is the child of impulse. Accustomed to homage and respect, she neither minds opinion nor fears blame. Her independence verges on imprudence. It estranges her lover; gives arms to her enemies; encourages her in a forbidden love; ruins her reputation, and ultimately, and because Léonce is the slave of the world he is, it tends to their mutual ruin.

The tale is written in the epistolary form. Madame de Staël found it established, and it gave her many opportunities of developing principles she wished to advocate. The opening letters introduce us to a young, enthusiastic, and beautiful widow, Delphine — Madame d'Albémar — who munificently presents a splendid estate to Mathilde, the daughter of her cousin and friend, Madame de Vernon. This lady is sweet, fascinating, and perfidious — Mathilde is honest, and rigidly devout. Delphine's noble present is meant to ensure her marriage with Léonce de Mondeville, who is as handsome as a hero of romance, and as proud as a Spanish mother could help to make him. No sooner do he and Delphine meet than passion seizes them both. No thought of dishonour or wrong checks either in the dawn of this love.

We may wonder, indeed, and ask: Is this his boasted honour? — is that her generosity? But passion is too strong for principle in the heart of Léonce, and Delphine, we know, is the child of impulse. She gives estates from impulse, and from impulse, too, she takes another woman's lover. Broken promises and perfidy are frequent enough in life, but it is

hard to find the romantic Léonce, the lofty Delphine, as mean as common mortals. It is the contrast between the singular virtues attributed to this pair, and their actions—ungenerous, dishonourable, and often base—that is the real immorality of the tale. What sort of virtues are they that scarcely save their owners from an error?

Delphine's compunction at taking Léonce from Mathilde exercises no influence on her conduct. It is Madame de Vernon's perfidy, not Delphine's generosity, that secures him to his betrothed. She loves her future husband, cold though she looks; and calm, lovely, sweet Madame de Vernon, who seems blind, but is not, lets matters go on, and is quite resolved to make M. de Mondeville keep his promises. Indolent but penetrating, she bides her time. She knows that the imprudence and trust of Delphine, that the jealous impetuosity of Léonce, will do her work.

Madame d'Albémar favours a last meeting between a lady and her lover. The husband, who has followed them, is killed in a duel, and her reputation is ruined. To Madame de Vernon the credulous Delphine commits her fate, her love, her honour. This faithful friend undertakes to prove Delphine's innocence to Léonce, and so skilfully does she work on his jealousy and pride that he marries Mathilde. Concealed within the shadow of a pillar, Delphine sees him lead her cousin to the altar; she hears him utter the irrevocable vows that divide them for ever, and she sinks in a deathlike swoon on the pavement of the church.

Delphine has lost all—her lover, his esteem; the promises of youth and life are engulfed in one dreary wreck. He is not less wretched. In vain is the husband of Mathilde convinced that she who alone gave life its joy is perfidious; furious jealousy far more than contempt is the feeling that perfidy awakens. Mistrust at having been deceived soon follows; he writes to Delphine and tells her how his passions have been exasperated. She is generous enough not to clear herself for his innocent wife's sake, but she taxes Madame de Vernon with her treachery.

This lady is the best-drawn character in the book. She is said to have been suggested by Talleyrand himself; and she is a felicitous mixture of good and evil, of art and truth, that make her look like a portrait. Her quiet manners, her wonderful though indolent finesse, the ardent love which Delphine

feels for her, almost fascinate us into forgetting that she is a dissembler, and a pitiless one. She is perfidious, but never repulsive.

The passages between her and Delphine — the art of one, the generous simplicity of the other — are very beautiful. The grief of Delphine on learning that her trust and friendship have been betrayed, a grief that outweighs the joy of being thought innocent by her lover — is a noble trait in her character. She loves, but passion cannot possess her whole heart; her friend is false, her first friend, her most dearly loved one, could betray her, and she feels deep sorrow and but little anger. It is Madame de Vernon who shews and feels most displeasure at so unwelcome an explanation; it is she who, spite her displeasure, remains cool. Delphine is indignant, but there is exquisite tenderness in her reproaches; her tears flow as she utters them, for she cannot forget in a moment the love of six years; and it is not she, it is the cold and heartless Madame de Vernon, who says that they must meet no more.

With great art the author has chosen this moment, when our forbearance towards this perfidious lady is wearing out, to make her die, repent, justify Delphine to Léonce, and plead for her innocent and ignorant daughter, by imploring the forgiveness and dying in the arms of her injured friend. But there is neither art nor good taste in the sudden appearance of Léonce, nor in the insults he heaps on his dying enemy; and incredible is the letter which, two days after his mother-in-law's death, M. de Mondeville writes to Delphine. In very eloquent but very plain language, he puts by his marriage with Mathilde as an unfortunate accident, and claims Delphine as his.

Can any amount of passion excuse insult so gross? A man's principles may be free, but unless he is a fanatic in the cause of immorality, he rarely goes so far as to extend them to a woman's virtue. Jealousy and respect keep sacred the principle that woman must be pure. To attempt her seduction is not merely a crime, it is also insolence, which no sophistry can extenuate. When Léonce, the proud gentleman so jealous of his fair name that the punishments of the next world seem nothing to him in comparison with shame in this — Léonce, who has made honour and reputation his second conscience, who relinquished Delphine on suspicion,

on shadowy proofs, and who made no attempt to win her back because he no longer held her innocent — when such a man, in short, tells a woman that he cannot live without her, and that his wife is no obstacle to their passion, what does he do but insult her deliberately? Honour and its laws are for him — what pride, what honour, what dignity does he acknowledge in her? None that his pleasure cannot violate.

Delphine will not so far forget the existence of Mathilde as to become the mistress of her husband, but she sees him daily. Their love she declares will make them better. The ennobling, religious power of love is to the last one of the favourite sentiments of these lovers. But to ennoble love, love must first be pure; wrong cannot lead to right, nor sin to God. The love of Léonce has always been exacting, it soon grows odious. Delphine will not become his mistress; she even resolves to leave him. Exasperated at the thought, M. de Mondeville threatens to kill himself in her presence, and attempts to extort from her a guilty and sacrilegious vow in the very church in which he was married. She faints with horror, and wakens in a burning fever. Scarcely is she recovered when his insane jealousy ruins her reputation. Women keep aloof from her, men insult her openly, and M. de Mondeville dare not for her own sake defend her. His pious wife, who knows, who suspects nothing, takes Delphine's part, and, in a transport of grief at friendship so unmerited, Delphine confesses that she loves her husband. This strange candour ruins the happiness of Mathilde; but she asserts her rights with firmness and dignity, and Delphine retires to a convent in Switzerland, where Léonce cannot pursue her.

— The story, vehement enough till now, becomes frantic. We may learn something from the struggles of virtue against passion, even though they should be weak and passion fervent. It is right we should know that duty, though obeyed, may seem stern and cold — that virtue is not easy, and, alas! not always pleasing — that there are delightful errors against which wisdom, a generous heart, many virtues, cannot always guard. Hitherto Delphine has done wrong; but knowing that it was wrong, now wrong shall become right, and she shall say so.

The Nemesis of injured love follows her to Switzerland. For not challenging Léonce, who had insulted him, one of her admirers, M. de Valorbe, is a disgraced man. He yielded

to Delphine's prayers; on her he is avenged. He lures her to a meeting for the purpose of ruining her reputation. He succeeds to the full bent of his wishes. The Superior of the convent is the aunt of Léonce. She knows that Mathilde's life is drawing to a close, and resolved that Madame d'Albemar shall not marry her nephew, she threatens to expel her unless she takes the vows. Delphine submits; she utters promises to Heaven, in the sanctity of which she does not believe — promises which, on the death of Mathilde, and the arrival of Léonce, she does not hesitate to break. Léonce threatens to commit suicide unless she will become his wife; and Delphine, convinced that her vows are not binding — and resolved that they shall not be — leaves the convent, and departs with her lover.

Léonce, at least, is an atheist. How can he venerate what he denies? But Delphine is not; and who that ever dared to confess a God would venture to say that vows can be deliberately made to that supreme being for a worldly convenience — a respectable home in this case — and as deliberately broken when that convenience has ceased? It is not Christianity that has a right to complain here — it lies beyond such arguments; it is the much-damaged cause of Deism.

If Madame de Staël held Delphine innocent in this, and laid her guilt to custom and society, she did not violate poetic truth so far as to reward it with happiness. When a woman has given up her reputation, her pride, her reserve, to a man, and in many respects her conscience, it is with that man that her happiness lies for the future. This Delphine does for Léonce; and his conduct, now that his wishes are on the eve of their fulfilment, is base and inconsistent. People point their finger at the fugitive nun and her lover; and that lover, whom duty and honour had ever found so resolute, shame crows and maddens. In her despair Delphine vows that she will never become his wife, and Léonce enables her to keep at least that vow: without warning or adieu he leaves her to join the Royalist forces and fight against the French Republicans. He loves her — and he leaves her: was all that fury of passion to end thus? He has poisoned her whole life; and when his work is done he protests that he adores her — and he goes. She is an angel in his eyes, but the world has judged and condemned her — it is enough. Love is said to be all-enduring; but we doubt if there are many women who could

follow a lover so cold at heart, though in words so impassioned. But Delphine discovers the route he has taken, pursues the fugitive — for what purpose we are not told — and reaches Verdun to find that he is a prisoner of war. She intercedes for him in vain; he is tried and sentenced to be shot. Delphine is allowed to spend in his dungeon what is to be the last night of his life. There might be pathos in the close of this ill-fated love, but for its singular and painful mixture of profane and religious feelings. That, on the threshold of the next world, Léonce should abjure his bitter creed of the soul's annihilation, and ask his more religious mistress to impart to him her own hopes of a God, merciful and forgiving, and of a life to come where love shall not be guilty or proscribed, is true enough to human nature, and to the heart's impulses. But when Delphine, on asking to accompany Léonce to the fatal field of death, is told that only a priest is thus privileged, and replies that she will fulfil a priest's ministry for the man she loves — and when, as a preparation to that ministry, she takes poison — the least pious may surely wish that religion had been left alone. Delphine expires before her lover, and one grave receives them.

Such was the *dénouement* of Delphine for twenty years. Another ending was found amongst Madame de Staël's papers, and with it the request that it might be substituted for the first. It is less painful and less violent, though consistent with the characters of the hero and heroine. Delphine leaves the convent and retires with her lover to his seat of Mondeville. He loves her; but the sense of her disgrace, which he must share if she becomes his wife, throws him into a fever. In his delirium he utters words which she understood but too well. Léonce recovers; but the blow is given, her heart is broken — and Delphine dies. She dies in his arms, looking at the rising sun, happy to leave a life which might have been so blest, and has been so bitter.

Léonce knows that his miserable pride has killed the woman he loved, and he will not survive her. He joins the Royalist forces, and falls in the first action.

Madame de Staël's reasons for substituting this ending to the first were that the execution of Léonce and the suicide of Delphine were considered as too violent by her friends, and as recalling too vividly the revolutionary period; but though she was thus amenable to literary criticism, nothing could

make her consider founded the want of morality which from the first was imputed to Delphine. This was a point on which she always felt and betrayed great soreness. Yet that the tendency of this book is bad, that it leads to the violation, not to the observance, of moral law, few can doubt. In vain Madame de Staël declared that she had made Delphine so wretched, "because she could not forgive her for loving a married man;" in vain her guilty passion is not gratified, but fearfully punished; this does not efface the immoral because untrue fact that she has every virtue and practises none. She is the most perfect as she is the loveliest of beings, but she can resist no temptation. Generosity, honour, the world, religion, are alike powerless to restrain her. The meanest understanding will refuse to believe this; in so far the book is not dangerous, but what is the meaning of such teaching?

Besides the general moral of the story, that implied in the epigraph — that man must brave opinion, and woman submit to it — was used by Madame de Staël to unfold three arguments, which she elaborated with some care: the superiority of natural over revealed religion as a rule of life — the necessity of divorce for general happiness in marriage — the ennobling nature of love.

Madame de Staël admired the Gospel, but she did not love its restrictions. Any rule beyond Deism she considered the bondage of mind and heart. She mistook the stringency of the law with its close observance. The holiest lives tell a very different story. Do they, does anything human fulfil the splendid idea of the Gospel? Were the first Christians, the apostles of Christ themselves, so faultless that we need fear too cold a perfection — if perfection can indeed be cold — as the result of Christianity? Yet whilst Madame de Staël claimed entire liberty of mind and heart, she inconsistently maintained that natural religion was sufficient to guide either. Natural religion is a beautiful instinct, but it is not a law. There is a splendid and alluring vagueness in Deism, but its code of morals is unknown to us. It is the silent unrevealed God. Conscience, which habit can deaden, the most common and most frightful of human calamities; reason, which is strong or weak according to the intellectual powers; society, that often errs — must be man's guide in Deism. Delphine, who pleads the Cause of Deism, assures us that it leads to every virtue: that may be; her arguments are often beautiful

and eloquent, but her own conduct is one still more convincing. What undoes her? Not her impulses — they are good; marry her to Léonce, and she is virtuous; but her absolute want of principle. She does not know what is lawful, what is forbidden. She has sublime ideas of a supreme being and immortality, but she takes another woman's husband, breaks solemn vows, and commits suicide. It is not wise to attack the moral part of Christianity by arguments thus supported, or to trust the cause of Deism to such a defender.

Madame Necker, blest in her marriage, wrote against divorce; Madame de Staël, unhappy in hers, pleaded in its favour. Unhappy marriages, she said, led to vice; and she concluded that, to have virtuous unions, divorce must be made easy. Elise, for instance, married an avaricious and disagreeable Dutchman. She procures a divorce from him, not so much because M. de Lebensai is a younger and more amiable man, as because "she could practise no virtue" with the unfortunate Dutchman. With M. de Lebensai virtue is as easy as it is delightful. But life has other ties besides those of married ties, which spring from it; are they to be broken every time they make virtue too hard a task? Then by what law shall the stream be kept sacred, if the fountain-head is to be violated with so much facility? Yet love in marriage, and marriage lasting till death, was certainly Madame de Staël's aim. It was not the weakness of the human heart that she meant to consecrate, but its rights that she wished to guard. A noble, womanly aim; but why begin at the wrong end? Divorce is but a palliative — the root of the evil is the recklessness with which men and women enter on the married state; the want of honour, forbearance, and love they show in the accomplishment of its duties. Teach how to marry well, that is the first lesson. If you cannot, of what use is divorce?

It is not because marriage is binding that Léonce is wretched. It is not Delphine's imprudence, his own credulity and Madame de Vernon's treachery, that have undone him. It is that he had no respect for marriage, that he deliberately desecrated a tie which to be blest must be held holy. Such errors make unhappy marriages, and it is possible to commit more than one. Roman ladies reckoned theirs by consulships. What if, after a few years, M. de Lebensai had not proved the

right man to be virtuous with, and Delphine the true wife of her husband's heart? The men and women whose temper leads them into such mistakes are rarely patient; there is, besides, a natural wish for easy happiness in the human heart, a wish that often prevails over virtue. But at least we call it guilt; to make vice legal, to declare that solemn ties can be broken when they have ceased to please, could only guard the rights of the weak or the faithless.

The ennobling nature of love who can doubt? It has been the theme of poets and sages — it is the boast and the precept of Christianity. But surely the love of Léonce and Delphine is not ennobling. In vain are they saved from the last fall, and society is made the scapegoat. The love which, like that of Léonce, has no faith in the loved one — the love which, like that of Delphine, is weak and debasing — never was a great love.

Of the impression which it produces on the reader — the fever, excitement, and abhorrence it alternately awakens — it is hard to speak. Love like this is not the blessing of the good, but the curse of the wicked. It is a love that would make one hail indifference with transport, for it would turn Eden itself into a place of torment. A fine genius, an eloquent and impassioned style, could not make "Delphine" a good book or a fine novel. New laws of right and wrong must be acknowledged ere "Delphine" is thought moral, and the taste of the public must change greatly before six volumes of such love metaphysics can charm many readers.

And yet, such is the magic of language, of noble thoughts, and generous feelings, that, with all its errors and deficiencies, "Delphine" commands attention, and more than attention; for it suggests moods of thought and speculation on some of the saddest and most perplexing problems of society and life. The tale ends, and leaves them unsolved, and society has not taken up the challenge. It has looked on "Delphine" as on the error of a fine intellect, and not troubled itself with the doctrines it meant to advocate.

As a novel "Delphine" has very few merits, but they are of a high order. An impassioned style, often incorrect, but always fascinating, bears us on. Madame de Vernon is drawn by a masterly hand. Delphine herself is irresistibly attractive; she charms and irritates us incessantly. We see her virtues melt away in unsubstantial desires, but we cling to the belief

that she might have been good. There is, however, one attribute of a fine nature which never deserts her, in the wreck of every other excellence. Delphine is full of faith. Her friend, her lover, inspire her with boundless trust. Through perfidy or passion they betray her, yet an irresistible impulse makes her forgive and believe again, until, trust being utterly broken, forgiveness alone is possible.

That forgiveness many a reader extends to her. Better judgment forbids it; but the charm, sweet and potent, of a great heart is on us, and we yield — not convinced, but conquered.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Corinne."

A COLDNESS to nature, which rarely co-exists with an ardent and powerful imagination, has long remained one of the traditional attributes of Madame de Staël. She lived at a time when Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, and Châteaubriand had made wild and romantic scenery fashionable; when the Alpine height, the torrent, and the mountain-path had thrown into oblivion the sweet pastoral landscape of Fénelon's "Telemachus," and of Gessner's and Florian's pseudo-idylls; and though she did not take part with the vanquished school, she had the frankness to declare that she preferred the Rue du Bac to the shores of Lake Lemman. Indeed her sincerity on this point never wavered. She was walking once with the two Schlegels and M. Fauriel. The latter chanced to admire the prospect before them. With a smile Madame de Staël asked if they had not yet got beyond the country. She seemed to think it a sort of conventional prejudice — and so it was for her, no doubt. She confessed to M. Molé, another admirer of landscape, that, were it not for the power of opinion, she would not open her window to see the Bay of Naples for the first time, whereas she would gladly travel five hundred leagues to talk with a new and brilliant mind.

There is nothing startling in the fact that one so richly dowered in mind and heart should fail in something. There is no nature so wealthy but has its poverty. But if we understand Madame de Staël's indifference to landscape, we cannot conciliate it with the perplexing admiration she professed for the northern school of poetry — for Macpherson's "Ossian" and Thomson's "Seasons" — works which require not merely a general sympathy with nature, but a delicate intuition into all her mysteries. Madame de Staël could drive through a fine landscape, nor raise her eyes from the book she was reading. Her own descriptions are suggestive, not of images, but of fine

thoughts. Yet her indifference was more apparent than real. Nature has many voices, which all do not hear alike. In the north her aspect is often veiled, like that of the Egyptian goddess. The faithful worshipper alone sees beauty in the clouded skies, the dreary moors, the misty mountains. In the south beauty need not be sought. The beauty of earth and sky, the serenity and repose of the very air, are enough for the senses and the heart. It was in a southern land that the Greek Menander thought the aspect of heaven and earth joy sufficient for a lifetime.

What geographical limits do for nations, temper often does for individuals. Minds are southern or northern. To some, the calmness of the sky, the glory of the sun, are the fulness of beauty. Others, more wayward, more fitful, require mysterious haunts — the lake, the waterfall, the wild heath, and the mountain. Of these, Madame de Staël certainly was not. The clear Paris sky, the tempered Paris sun, delighted her more than the austere beauties which surround the city and the lake of Geneva. Her admiration of Macpherson's forgeries, and of Thomson's penetrating pictures of nature, sprang more from the feeling with which she regarded everything English, than from a genuine sympathy with the misty heroes of the one, or the calm English pastorals of the other. She was deeply convinced that the political institutions of a country ennoble its literature, and it would have cost her a pang to acknowledge that poets born and bred under a constitution could be inferior to poets whom despotism had nurtured.

In its indifference to detail, and to the sad, suffering aspect of northern nature, her mind was a southern mind. When she visited Italy, after her father's death, she found what she could feel best — the charm of climate. That something "hostile," which repelled her in the north, became, in the south, "a friendliness" of nature to man. In every page of "Corinne" is conveyed a sense of light, breadth, and warmth, tempered by repose, and few works render so well this great characteristic of Italian scenery. The beneficial influence on her mind of a fine climate, of a poetic race, of noble works of art, and of classic memorials is equally apparent in this, one of her greatest works. The Italian aspect of "Corinne" is beautiful — it is the foreign element that is uninteresting and cold. It was introduced for the sake of contrast, yet Corinne herself

knew well that "nothing spoils works of imagination like having an aim."

This precept is constantly violated in "Corinne." Madame de Staël wrote it to unburthen her mind. Classic Italy, her ruins, her works of art; grief for her father's death; personal disappointments; resentment that society should show more severity for the errors than admiration for the splendid gifts of genius; modern Italy, her people and her literature — all found their place in "Corinne," and formed that great whole. "Corinne, or Italy," is the story of a high-souled woman of genius, and it is a descriptive, philosophic, and literary account of Italy. It is true that Italy rivals Corinne as we read, and that Corinne weakens the impression produced by Italy; but though a novel ought to be nothing but a novel, and though fiction detracts from the reality which is the charm of a book of travels, Madame de Staël's attempt was like Byron's, later, in "Childe Harold," singularly felicitous. It suited her genius — ~~too metaphysical for fiction, and too imaginative for mere truth.~~ "Delphine," which is much more of a novel than "Corinne," is a far inferior work. If we take away its vigorous style, "Delphine" might have been written by any one — it has no striking originality of character, incident, or story to recommend it. "Corinne," on the contrary, could only be written by Corinne herself. "Delphine" can be read and forgotten — "Corinne" seems written in light. It has the fine distinctness which is one of the most remarkable attributes of a great book.

In both tales the author fails when she forsakes eloquence and analysis, passion and character, to enter into the minutiae of daily life; but whereas the deficiency is awkward in "Delphine," in "Corinne" we do not feel it. We are carried beyond it into a region of art and song — we wander through an idealised Italy — we live with an inspired creature, who, though not the fulfilment of the woman of genius so many have vainly attempted to paint, is the most successful delineation we possess, as yet, of that rare combination — the sublime gift of song, clothed in the fragile form and beauty of woman.

And imperfectly drawn though she is, what a being is that Corinne! Delphine was a lady of the world, with the faults and virtues of a disciple of Jean Jacques. Corinne belongs to no particular time; her youth in England, her love for that

cold-hearted Scotchman, Lord Nelvil, are accidents that move us slightly. Corinne is herself, a grand antique statue, carved by a modern hand — a pure disciple of the ancient *hetairæ*, an *Aspasia* of the nineteenth century, born to rule men and men's hearts, yet dying, like *Sappho*, of a love contemned. A tale like this must needs be told like a poem, with the free, vigorous style, the noble digressions, the splendid flights, which *Madame de Staël* loved. Without effort, she placed it at once amongst the greatest works of fiction in the French language. Indeed, it stands alone of its kind, beyond the range of imitation. Its faults, as well as its merits, give it that solitary pre-eminence. If its incidents sometimes recall those of other novels, it is like no other tale as a whole. It has the unity, the singleness of a fine poem, and in none of her works has *Madame de Staël* so often approached poetical inspiration as in this. Corinne's address to Italy — her proud lament over the fallen glories of that land, where the "shadows of *Dante* have a stronger life than the living of to-day" — her improvisation at *Cape Misenum*, where the eternal beauty of nature smiles at the wreck of man's power and pride — the pathetic exclamation, so harmonious in the original: "Oh, earth! bathed with blood and tears, thou hast never ceased to bear flowers and fruit! Art thou then pitiless to man, and does his dust return to thy maternal bosom, and not make it thrill?" — are passages both celebrated and familiar to all the readers of that fine book. *Byron*, who knew where to find and whence to borrow imaginative beauty, had read "Corinne" to some purpose when he wrote that magnificent address to the ocean which closes the fourth canto of "*Childe Harold*." The splendour of expression is on the side of the poet, but the ideas and images which it clothed are to be found in a careless passage of "*Corinne*." Speaking of a church in *Ancona* which overlooks "that magnificent sea on which man can never imprint his track," *Madame de Staël* adds, "Earth he tills, his roads cleave the mountains, for him rivers narrow into canals, but if vessels furrow the waters for a moment, the wave at once effaces that slight token of subjection, and the sea re-appears such as it was at the moment of creation."

We have it all, from the —

"His steps are not upon thy paths —
Thy fields are not a spoil for him,"

To the famous

"Such as creation's dawn beheld — thou rollest now."

If we abstract Italy, the antiquities, the galleries, and the literary conversations of Corinne and her lover, the tale is easily told and understood.

Lord Edgermond marries in Italy, and has a daughter who remains in the land of her mother until she reaches her fifteenth year. From the sunshine of the south, from the love of art and song, she is then transferred to a country home in Northumberland, and to the society of her father's second wife, Lady Edgermond, the most rigid of English matrons. The dull and narrow routine of this provincial life, the cold and unceasing restrictions to which the ardent Italian girl must submit, her revolt useless but incessant, are told with considerable skill and power. On the very day of her arrival Miss Edgermond manages to outrage her stepmother's sense of decorum, by quoting some Italian verses in which the word "love" occurred. The offence took place at a silent and formal English dinner-table, and the offending lines were addressed to an aged gentleman near whom the future Corinne was seated. Lady Edgermond blushes, and by rising gives the ladies the signal of retiring. Then comes a lecture, mild in form, severe in spirit. "Young ladies must not talk in company, especially must they never quote poetry with love in it; finally, Miss Edgermond must endeavour to forget that misguided Italy which she had much better have never known." The cold clouded sky of Northumberland seems to hold the same language; and Lord Edgermond himself, though he is not without sympathy for his Italian daughter, endeavours to curb her ardent temper and imagination, as gifts useless and even dangerous in her present mode of life. He assures her that, unless she complies with the quiet, formal manners of the new world she has entered, she will never be able to marry; and that moreover she will be miserable, unhappy, and censured. In short, genius and intellect are calamities in this unfortunate centre of mediocrity. "Amongst the persons whom we saw," says Corinne, speaking later of this time of her life, "there were some who were not deficient in mind, but they smothered it as a troublesome gloom, and generally towards forty this faint, intellectual motion had grown dead with the rest."

"In birth, marriage, and death, consisted the whole history of our social circle, and these three events differed less there than elsewhere. Imagine what it was for an Italian like me to be seated at a tea-table several hours every day after dinner with my stepmother's friends, seven ladies, the most sedate in the county. Two were single ladies of fifty, timid as at fifteen, but not quite so merry. One lady would say to another: 'My dear, do you think it time to wet the tea?'

"'No, my dear,' was the answer, 'I think it too soon. The gentlemen are not coming yet.'

"'Will they stay long to-day?' said a third; 'what do you think of it, dear?'

"'I do not know,' answered the fourth. 'I think the election is to take place next week. Perhaps they will stay to talk it over.'

"'No,' put in a fifth, 'I rather think they are talking about the fox-hunt that interested them so much last week, and which is to be renewed next Monday. I think, however, dinner will soon be over.'

"'Oh! I scarcely hope so,' said a sixth, sighing."

This intellectual town, "where women drank tea, played at whist, and grew old doing the same thing, and staying in the same spot" — where "Time was sure not to miss them, for he knew where they were to be found" — was not an exaggeration when Madame de Staël wrote, whatever it may be now. An unfortunate borough in Northumberland, the name of which the author of "Corinne" had never heard, was so struck with its resemblance to that described by Corinne, that not satisfied with keeping to itself the fact of this unpleasant likeness, it loudly proclaimed to the world that it was the injured original Madame de Staël had taken the liberty of copying.

Her father's death, and the increasing despotism of Lady Edgermond, induce Corinne to break through this bondage. She is of age; she is rich and free. She departs for her native land — is thought dead in England — and assuming the name of Coriane, she becomes the most celebrated improvisatrice and poetess of Italy.

It is in that character, in Rome — borne on the triumphal car that takes her to the Capitol, there to be crowned with the wreath which Petrarch wore, and which, had he not died, would have bound Tasso's brow — that we see Corinne for the

first time. We know nothing of her past — of her youth in England — of her mixed parentage. She is all Italian then — in speech, genius, and beauty — and no character suits her so well.

This aspect of Corinne is the truest and the best, because it is that of the woman of genius. Her thoughts, her language never destroy the splendid ideal which has been placed before us. Her mind is large, deep, and penetrating; her speech is poetic and eloquent. She is an admirable instance, if such be needed, that genius alone has a right, even as genius alone has the power, to paint genius in its fulness. This intellectual supremacy is so great that we submit to it without demur. We endure the triumphal car of Corinne, even though it belongs more to heathen times than to prosaic days like ours. But Corinne is scarcely a modern woman. Attired like Domenichino's sibyl — young, handsome, and inspired — like a Greek muse, or a Delphi priestess, made for song, joy, and love — she passes before us like a glorious vision of the ancient times when neither muse nor priestess was yet a fiction. Such Madame de Staël meant her to be considered when she thus described her.

"The four white horses of Corinne's car made their way through the crowd. On that car — built after an antique model — Corinne was seated, and young girls clad in white walked by her side. . . She was attired like Domenichino's sibyl. An Indian shawl, twisted round her head, mingled with her beautiful black hair. Her robe was white, with a blue drapery fastened beneath her bosom. Her costume was very picturesque, though it did not differ sufficiently from the fashion to be thought affected. Her bearing was noble and modest. One could see that she was well pleased to be admired, but a feeling of shyness mingled with her joy, and seemed to deprecate her triumph. The expression of her countenance, of her eyes, of her smile, interested in her behalf, and even before a deeper feeling subdued him a first look made Lord Nelvil her friend. Her arms were dazzlingly beautiful — her figure, tall and somewhat full, like that of a Greek statue, spoke eloquently of youth and happiness. There was something inspired in her look. The natural manner with which she bowed and acknowledged the applause she received, enhanced her extraordinary situation. She gave at

one and the same time the idea of a priestess of Apollo advancing towards the temple of the sun, and of a woman thoroughly unaffected in all the matters of life."

Corinne is twenty-six; she is in the prime of life, and in all the fulness of fame, when Lord Nelvil crosses her path, and destroys her happiness, genius, and beauty. This young Scotch nobleman, the son of Lord Edgermond's dearest friend, was destined in youth to become Corinne's husband; but the vivacity, the southern fire, the very genius of the young girl, frightened the prudent father; and the quiet, fair-haired Lucile, her sister by Lord Edgermond's second wife, was preferred to the brilliant Italian. With none of these particulars, not even with her real name, is Lord Nelvil acquainted when he sees Corinne in Italy. His heart is laden with remorse and grief, for he attributes his father's premature death to his own guilty intrigue with a Frenchwoman whom he wished to marry. Fascinated by the beauty and the genius of Corinne, he lingers near her; but he cannot forget that a woman like her, a foreigner and a poetess, is the last wife his father would have selected for him. Weak, vacillating, and uncertain, he alternately resists or yields to a passion pregnant with sorrow and calamities. With Corinne for his guide, he visits Rome and her marvels, Naples and Venice, still perplexing himself and his mistress with scruples which satisfy neither conscience nor love.

All the genius of Corinne is exerted, and all the seductions of Italy are displayed, to keep this lover, so little worth the keeping. We have admirable conversations on Italy and Italian literature, and enchanting walks through Rome and her galleries, in the Campagna and among its ruins. The lovers wander through the gorgeous scenery of Southern Italy — on the slopes of Vesuvius, in the lonely streets of Pompeii, by the desolate shores of once luxurious Baïa — and wherever they go, the struggle between love and opinion still fills Oswald's heart. The marvellous gifts of Corinne, her devotedness, her generosity, cannot conquer his jealousy, mistrust, and ever-returning scruples. In vain Corinne makes herself his slave; her master, uneasy "to hold this queen in chains," cannot enjoy his empire in peace.

At length the Gordian knot is cut: Lord Nelvil is ordered home to join his regiment, which is to sail for the West Indies.

He goes and leaves Corinne, who has his promise and his ring, and whom neither saves from her lover's inconstancy. Scarcely has he left her, when, the power and charm of her presence being gone, he grows cold. He sees Lucile, young, lovely, and pure — the wife his father wished him to take — and he cannot see her unmoved. Corinne, who has followed him — not through jealousy or mistrust, but through the folly of a love which will risk all for love's own sake — sees him with her sister, and, convinced that his heart has strayed from her, she sends back the ring that bound him, returns to Italy, and there, no longer the brilliant, the inspired Corinne of the Capitol, but a broken-hearted woman whose great hope has been wrecked, she lingers a few years in solitude, and dies, after seeing once more and forgiving her repentant lover. He does not go unpunished. The avenging Nemesis of love has inflicted on him a dragon mother-in-law, and a stiff statue of virtue for a wife. Too heartless to be true to Corinne, he has feeling enough to be troubled with useless remorse, and especially to compare this delightful companion with the correct but insipid Lucile. In short, Lord Nelvil, after proving a faithless lover, makes a very indifferent husband.

Thus ends the tale, which, though it deals so much with love, is in reality no love-story; for, apart from even its numerous digressions, love is but little in it. Corinne absorbs us. Like the queen in a classic tragedy, she fills the scene; she even effaces her own love and its sorrows. Othello was not a lover; he was Oriental jealousy in a deceived husband's form. Werther was not a lover; he was wearied scepticism in the nineteenth century; and Corinne is not woman's love, passionate and devoted — she is genius, giving to man the adoration that should have been bestowed on art alone.

Such was not Madame de Staël's meaning. She thought as highly of love as of genius, and she wished to show the sorrows that await both when they unite in woman; but in this perilous part of her attempt she was not quite successful. It is hard to represent genius happy in, or conquered by, love. Love claims a divine equality, and genius knows no peer. It is a solitary power, that yields empire to none; and true love is all subjection. Genius can be blest in spite of its greatness; the human being sinks into happiness; but it does not follow that the mighty intellect has found its mate. Genius, happy

in love, almost always amazes and mortifies us — that so little should make it blest. On the other hand, to shew genius wrecked for evermore when love is gone, is to deny its greatness. Passion does not conquer noble minds. The heart is not cold or weak, but the power to endure is great.

There is only one aspect of genius which it is easy to paint — its solitude. That we can all understand and believe in. We all feel that the poet is first in the intellectual world, as the martyr is in the religious — that, like him, he is consecrated to sorrow, endurance, and immortality; and nobler than to live a peaceful and untroubled life, does it seem to fulfil this destiny, and die.

We have this solitude of genius in "Corinne;" but here genius is also humbled into the worship of cold mediocrity. Lord Nelvil weakens our admiration for his mistress. The charm which binds the high-souled and inspired woman does not reach us. Both she and Madame de Staël assure us that he is a sublime, angelic being; but we know him to be weak, faithless, and cold-hearted. When Corinne kneels to him, adores him, and dies for him, we are grieved at the profanation of woman's beauty, genius, and pride.

It is not because he does not marry her that Lord Nelvil is so mean. There is a cloud on her past; she leads a strange life; a man with whom the ties of family, country, and honour are strong may pause before he binds his life to hers. But the renunciation which great love might have made heroic, weak love makes paltry. He has not the strength to be true; he never really loves her. If the passion of man is brief, it is at least fervent whilst it lasts. Lord Nelvil's is neither ardent nor enduring. Selfish and timorous doubts never leave him. Mr. Edgermond reminds him that women are made for the shade, and he cannot forget the oracular words. His manner of making love is insolent; for it is not manly. He does not offer to marry her; yet he reminds her that a husband is worth a host of lovers. When he takes the desperate resolve of becoming that husband, he words it doubtfully, in an exclamation: "Cruel woman! you see that twenty times a day I am ready to offer you my hand and my life," &c. Yet he is better in this mood, when he treats "Corinne" to a puritanic lecture, than when he turns fond and faints on seeing her act the part of Juliet. Cold and shy, like an Englishman, Lord

Nelvil is more lachrymose than Englishmen usually are. His fine eyes are constantly filling with tears. To this melting mood he unites pedantic stiffness. Count d'Erfeuil, a flighty Frenchman, innocently asks him, in a ball-room, what he thinks of Rome. Shocked at so indecorous a question, Lord Nelvil solemnly replies: "One cannot speak seriously in a ball-room; and *you know I cannot speak otherwise.*"

Some admirable remarks and speeches he makes every now and then; but we know it is Madame de Staël who is talking all the time. When he talks on his own account he is inexorably dull. Lord Nelvil's transports and despair on parting with Corinne are not more convincing. We doubt if he ever threatened to throw himself into the canal at Venice; we do not believe that he offered to sacrifice his military honour in order to remain with Corinne. He will not marry her; why should he meet death or disgrace for her sake? The spirit of worldly prudence guides his actions. What has passion to do in that cold heart? His rapid infidelity justifies our scepticism. It is as weak as the love that preceded it. No violent, no engrossing passion breaks the tie which bound him to Corinne. His love thaws away, but no second love enters that weak heart. Cecile is very beautiful and very calm. After the glow and inspiration of Corinne, Lord Nelvil finds a feeling of repose in looking at this half-angel, whose voice is rarely heard; but he does not love her, and he is faithless, without the only plausible excuse of inconstancy — a second passion, more ardent than the first. His remorse is vehement, and there is truth in that, for useless penitence is one of the features of moral weakness, but that it should last years and darken his old life is not likely. Surely a man so weak in love was not strong in sorrow.

Some of his inconsistencies are genuine, others are fictitious, wilful additions of the author. Corinne herself is not always true. Whenever Corinne is inspired, an Italian improvisatrice — whenever, with her harp-like lyre, she sings the fallen glories of her country — whether it be at the Capitol, in the glow of her triumph, or at Cape Misenum, seated midst ruins, with the rising moon lighting the vast and melancholy bay — she is true, at least, to the marvellous ideal we have received; and Italy is so poetic a country that, the

genius of Corinne being granted, she is more credible there than elsewhere.

But there are two Corinnes, and, save in a few eloquent scenes of grief and passion, the woman often belies the poetess. Corinne has not the reserve of experience, but she has its mistrust. She is free in telling her love, but not certain that it will endure. On Lord Nelvil's first hint of passion, she replies: "Let us leave to time, let us leave to chance, to decide if that impression of a day will last more than a day. If our souls understand one another, our mutual affection will not be transient." This is the language of a worldly woman, not of a woman who can die of love.

This contradiction between what we are told, that she is indeed what she often seems, and what her language and actions prove her to be, is constant and irritating. She is natural, the child of impulse, a simple, trusting woman. Yet vanity and wilfulness mark her love. Lord Nelvil charms her because he is cold, unknown, and mysterious; because, though not hard to win, he is hard to keep. It is a love of the imagination, a French love of the world, not a burning Italian passion. A cold love, uselessly risking honour and reputation, but full of sceptical doubts of its own immortality. These two lovers are indeed very unloverlike. They represent propriety arrayed against genius. We know it, and unfortunately they know it too. Conscious that they are antagonistic principles, they feel that they have met but to suffer and part. Love with them is no divine, eternal union of life, soul and heart. They can love, nor think that they love for ever. They have not even the illusions of mere passion, the fallen angel which, while it lasts, at least wears the very aspect of true love.

But if even genius cannot always reconcile glaring inconsistencies, it rarely wants the dangerous power of making them attractive. And the greatest inconsistency of all, the broken-hearted end of Corinne, is turned into the noble and sorrowful teaching that the mortal is but the preparation for the immortal; that happiness and sorrow alike are only means to reach the great end. That severing from all human ties, that bitter struggle between love and faith, cost Corinne her life. She conquers, but she dies; and when the victory is won, all is over.

"Fermosi al fin il cor che balzo tanto!" ~

She lingers long enough to see her life consumed by that intellectual activity which once fed it. Grief has prevailed over genius, and, amazed at the wreck of gifts once so splendid, Corinne pities herself as a stranger might. The very consciousness of beauty and endowments that could not win love, is only painful and irritating when beauty and all that enhanced it once are faded. She has been decaying slowly for years. When Lord Nelvil, who is in Italy with his wife and daughter, asks to see her, Corinne refuses with mingled bitterness and dignity of injured love. She taxes Lord Nelvil with having deceived her, "willingly or not, what matter? He was not the man I believed him to be. For a year he enjoyed the feeling with which he had inspired me; but when he was required to defend me, when deeds were to prove his heart, he did nothing. Can he boast of a sacrifice, of a generous impulse? He is happy now; he enjoys all that the world esteems. I am dying; let him leave me in peace!"

Yet they meet in her last moments — against her wish, it is true; and when Corinne is borne back from Florence, where she dies, to Rome, the city of her triumph, Lord Nelvil accompanies her. He follows her funereal train along the streets through which her triumphal car once had passed. His grief, we are told, is extreme; life and reason nearly forsake him — yet he recovers, to lead an exemplary domestic life. "But did he forgive himself — his past conduct?" asks the author; "was he satisfied with a common lot after what he had lost? I know not, and in this respect I wish neither to blame nor absolve him." Let it be. Corinne, Lord Nelvil, are mere shadows; we need not quarrel with them. One is genius, the other is love — the chastiser of its errors. Corinne herself has told us so! — "He is the angel with the flaming sword, placed by God at the gates of paradise."

We can have but a weak impression now of the sensation "Corinne" produced on its appearance. It was an event of European interest — and not without cause, for a great mind had spoken. In Edinburgh, despite the war, "Corinne" received her welcome. Madame de Saussure, whose son was then studying in Scotland, mentions how the learned and scientific men of the modern Athens used to stop in the streets to talk of the new novel.

But "Corinne" was more than a novel, as Madame de

Staël was more than a novelist. We have seen her but under one aspect of her literary career, and it had many. The eloquent critic, the acute thinker, the clear though dogmatic politician, would show us another Madame de Staël, far more wonderful than the novelist. It is that one who is world-known, and who has made the great fame of the other. "Delphine," "Corinne" are but the gentle aspect of that great and powerful mind which would not depart without having told us what it thought of love and woman.

THE END.

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